

American

DECEMBER 25 CENTS

MERCURY

*James Burnham: Can Washington
Conduct Political Warfare?*

Letter from New Orleans:
DIXIE—THE THING ITSELF

Seven Ways to Save the UN

*Bernard Wolfe: The Man
With the Rubber Nose*

The Painting Plague

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American

MERCURY

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Founded by Henry L. Mencken

TWENTY-NINTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

In forthcoming issues:

Serge Fliegers:

Battle of the Brains

The Revolution of the Thinking Machines

James Burnham:

The Policy of Liberation

Last in a series of articles examining United States foreign policy. — "When we call a policy 'offensive,' what we are really saying is simply that it aims to win."

Joseph Stocker:

Razzmatazz

How to Start a Big-City Newspaper

THE AMERICAN MERCURY MAGAZINE, INC.

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In the



MERCURY's

OPINION

***The Pathway
To a New Era***

THIS MONTH is an important one to *Mercury* writers and *Mercury* readers because it marks the end of the first phase of an effort to create what we have hoped can be a new and resolute *thinking* magazine for a new and resolute era in American life. This is the twenty-fifth issue of an undertaking founded in the firm belief that 1952 would see the end of a twenty-year cycle and the beginning of a new and different one.

In the years immediately following World War II America was tired. There was confusion and retreat. The government was in the hands of men of little vision. Those were the years that saw the loss of China and Czechoslovakia, the Hiss case,

and finally Korea. The election in 1948 went by default: Truman in winning received three million fewer votes than did Stevenson in losing by a landslide in 1952. We ourselves had little interest in the 1948 election: we were marking time in New Mexico, writing war memoirs, doing a few lectures and an occasional magazine piece.

By the fall of 1950 anybody who traveled over America — anybody who stood on lecture platforms and looked into the faces of thoughtful people — could feel the nation stirring. China, Czechoslovakia, Hiss, and Korea, these had been enough. The resolution of 1933 had spent itself, but a new resolution was building up. A new generation had come of age. The year 1952 would be a

pivotal year: something old would end in that year and something new would begin. Both politically and culturally the American cycle beginning in 1953 would be different from that which began in 1933. We wanted a part in ending the old and in defining the new: hence the new *Mercury*.

The twenty-four months since then have been difficult; but all efforts at creation are difficult. There has been the agonizing business of trying to find new writers and introducing them to the proper new readers. There were the long nights of trying to think and write on airplanes flying back from lecture engagements. Through it we have been sustained by a growing company of readers who have fought with us, suffered with us for our mistakes, and shared our several satisfactions.

Our chief satisfactions are these:

1. We provided more ammunition for the political campaign than any other magazine. Millions of reprints of our articles — many more than any other magazine — were bought and distributed by our readers.
2. We were the only American magazine in the politico-literary group which urged General Eisenhower to seek the Republican nomination, and which pointed out the opportunities awaiting him.
3. We now enjoy the largest news-

stand sale of any magazine in our field, and as we attract more new and forthright writers we expect also to attract more thoughtful readers than any magazine of this type has ever had. Thinking is a process not yet entirely forsaken in America.

For those who would like to reflect on how the election of Eisenhower came about, we recommend an examination of our own modest effort in the *Mercury* files.

IN OUR FIRST ISSUE, December, 1950, we had an article on James Forrestal, because he had been one of the frustrated men of the tired, irresolute era: he had wanted to do in 1946 what the nation would not be ready to do until 1952. We proposed this epitaph for Forrestal:

Here lies a patriot who also possessed vision. In a period of crisis for this nation, when mediocrity was enthroned in Washington, he stood forth as a first-rate mind, a dedicated spirit, an inspiring Renaissance man who understood the realities of the world in which he lived, and who, scorning opportunism, gave his energy, his mind, and his life.

In setting forth a credo for the new *Mercury*, we had this to say:

Now, perhaps even more than in the Twenties, is the time for those who value the human personality to attack those who would sacrifice it to Order and Security. . . . The new *Mercury* will be a hopeful magazine.

We believe that we will live to see the banner of freedom unfurled on a Ural mountain top. And we believe that young Americans, rejecting the vice of mass thinking, will, like Mr. Dos Passos, come to understand that "this country was not founded to furnish glamorous offices for politicians, or to produce goods and services, or handouts of easy money. This country was founded to make men free."

In that same issue there was an article by Max Eastman called "Can Truman Be Educated?" It said:

So long as President Truman can say, as he did recently, "The real trouble with the Russians is that they are suffering from a complex of fear and inferiority where we are concerned," America is without leadership in the most subtle and complex and implacable danger she has ever confronted.

All of those articles sold thousands of reprints; hundreds of newspapers quoted from them; and the new *Mercury* was born. That was just two years ago.

In March 1951 we published "The Tragedy of George Marshall," in which we said:

At a corner of one of the vast avenues in the Pentagon, erect in a high-backed chair, sits a tragic old man. He is George Catlett Marshall, General of the Armies, Secretary of Defense, former Secretary of State, adviser to Presidents, and, in the eyes of Harry Truman, the "greatest living American." He is a devoted old

warrior — patriotic, loyal, courageous; yet his life is a tragedy, both for himself and for the cause of mankind, because his unsound judgment has helped to lead this country from one disaster to another.

We didn't call General Marshall a traitor; we called him a patriot. We didn't attack him in anger; we considered him in sorrow. We didn't imply any treachery; we only lamented his capacity for being wrong. To us General Marshall personifies all the well-intentioned Americans who, through their misunderstanding of their world, have led us to tragedy.

BY MAY, 1951, the country had been jolted by a series of corruption disclosures. To match every uncovering of one of Truman's money-changers, there was a corresponding shock from civil life: the basketball fixes, the cheating at West Point, etc.

The President met these by comforting his mink-coated stenographer and her "fixing" husband through their "ordeal of political persecution," and by assuring his press conference that his fixers were "all honorable men."

It was then that we struck the President the hardest blow of his career. We published "Is Truman Honest?" and it became the most famous article to appear in the *Mercury* since "Hatrack." It sold more than two million reprints.

In this article we examined quite calmly some of the bigger lies among the Truman claims, and we closed with this warning:

But if this nation is to survive — or, indeed, be worthy of survival — its citizenry will have to reject the Truman definition of honor. For why should patriots continue to nourish a nation with their blood when the proper has become what you can get away with, when the expedient has become the honorable, when a lie believed has become truth?

That Truman's definitions have now been rejected, few would deny.

In September, 1951, the *Mercury's* featured article was "Eisenhower Will Run."

In October, 1951, the *Mercury* redoubled its efforts to inspire a spirit of revolt among young Americans. We published two articles: "How to Be a Republican and Enjoy It" and "A Call for Revolt on the Campus."

In the first we said:

What is patently the first need is for millions of *young* Americans to *want* to join the Republican Party. . . . However sad this party may be, it is the principal hope for a change. . . . Those of us who are opposed to the philosophy of the Achesons and the Hisses; those of us who are concerned as much with freedom as with material security; those of us who believe that life is essentially an individual responsibility; those of us who want the American heritage to continue to signify freedom as well as opportunity to be comfortable —

we must find a way to make ourselves effective in 1952. . . . I believe we can best accomplish our purpose by trying to build an effective, hopeful Republican Party.

In "A Call for Revolt on the Campus" we said:

This is an invitation to thoughtful students to join us in a revolt against the Democratic Party. This party has betrayed the round-eyed faith of American youth, and if we are to hope again the young man of 1951 must first understand the nature of the betrayal, then he must find a new cause worthy of his devotion. . . . Hope lies only in revolt.

Approximately seven million young Americans cast their first votes in the 1952 election. For the first time since the Republican Party won the support of the young Civil War veterans, more than half of the young people's vote was cast against the Democratic Party.

IN NOVEMBER, 1951, we published I "Why a Southerner Should Vote Republican," an article which sold thousands of reprints in the South, and which was reproduced in full by scores of southern newspapers. It explained and justified the South's traditional devotion to the Democratic Party; acknowledged the South's great debt to the New Deal, and to Franklin Roosevelt; and pointed out why the time has come for a healthy Republican Party in the South.

The South today is in a position to relax as an equal, politically, economically, and culturally, with the rest of the nation; therefore the South must now assume more responsibility for the national welfare. . . . The way of hope for the thoughtful southerner today is to cut free from a Democratic Party which has been captured by his ideological enemies, and which, if unrestrained, will lead this nation into bankruptcy and totalitarianism.

The most hopeful area in America today is the South. For the finest element in *young* southern society is now moving to make the Republican Party an effective national party. The carpetbagger days, the days of one-partyism, are over in the South.

In December, 1951, we addressed an "Open Letter to General Eisenhower":

What this country needs, general, is a *great man*. Not a Leader in the totalitarian sense: Americans will never crowd under a balcony chanting "Doo-chay! Doo-chay!" But Americans do want a man they can be enthusiastic about. They want a big man; an honest man; a colorful man; an unselfish man who will move into the White House, drive out the chiseling little money-changers, and make most Americans proud of their President again. Americans also want to believe that they have a wise man for President — a man who can direct the safeguarding of the richest nation in all history, and who, within prudent bounds, can extend aid to other

worthy and aspiring people. . . . I think this, general: I think that most Americans regard you as their likeliest candidate for greatness. And I confess that as one American I am intrigued with your possibilities. It's possible, I believe, for you to be elected President; and it is possible for you to become the greatest President this country has had since Lincoln. . . . I say these are possibilities. I don't know that you have either the capacity — physical, mental or spiritual — or the desire to try to realize them. But they are possibilities that no man should regard lightly. And as one American with a sense of history, I'd like to see you, sir, try to realize them.

That letter was forwarded to General Eisenhower in Paris by many of our mutual friends. His reactions to it, being confidential, will have to wait on his biographers.

Our article, "What Eisenhower Has Learned in Europe," in January 1952, concluded with this paragraph:

There may still be doubts in America as to whether Eisenhower is a "liberal" or a "conservative." But judging from what he must have learned in Europe, it appears likely that he will now prefer the company and counsel of conservatives and that he will regard American "liberals" with distrust.

AT THAT TIME virtually the entire "liberal" press in America was plugging for Eisenhower. Their

"disillusionment" was to come much later.

That same month, it being the first month of 1952, we had an editorial, "This Is the Pivotal Year," which was widely distributed and reproduced. It said:

This is the pivotal year. If the Democratic Party, now irretrievably committed to bigger government, can be beaten and thrown into retreat, then perhaps there is hope that Americans can once again discipline their government. There is hope for a return to liberalism — the liberalism which holds all power suspect, and which knows that when men seek security at the price of liberty they always lose both. But if there is another Democratic victory, or, worse, if there is an inconclusive or irresolute Republican victory, then all hope for liberalism can be abandoned in our time. . . .

In April, 1952, we published "Freedom's Case Against Dean Acheson." It was the calm, factual presentation of the career of another well-intentioned but tragically mistaken individual. It, too, sold more than a million reprints. The State Department tried to "answer" it through the press, but all our efforts to get a confrontation before any public body were futile.

We reviewed Acheson's record from the day that he was first retained by the Soviet Union — all his statements in support of Soviet policy during the fateful postwar

year when America was confused — and we concluded with these words:

During the period of Acheson's stewardship at the State Department, more than six hundred million human beings have been dragged into Soviet slavery. Soviet power has mushroomed until it now threatens the existence of freedom everywhere on earth. It therefore seems fair to ask this question: have the actions and attitudes of Dean Acheson aided the cause of freedom in its struggle against Soviet slavery, or have they impeded it? On November 4, 1952, the American people will have the opportunity to answer this question.

Certainly the judgment on Dean Acheson was loud and clear on Election Day.

In May we defended Eisenhower from the charges that he was not a *real* Republican, that he could never criticize the Truman government, and that he was the candidate of freaks and faddists. And in June we advanced a request which should not be forgotten: "We Must Open the Archives":

If there is to be new hope among Americans in 1953 we must elect a President who, first of all, will open up the records. Some of the records, no doubt, have been altered or stolen, but the new President can begin by letting us examine what remains. Then, while the historians set down the facts, the new President can proceed, by truthfulness, to the restoration of public confidence in the government of the United States.

In June, 1951, after that sad performance at Abilene, we confess that we suffered a short spell of uneasiness. We feared that Eisenhower might lose either the nomination or the election by listening to those counsellors who insisted that he "say nothing."

If General Eisenhower, either as a candidate for the nomination or for the Presidency, begins to trim or equivocate, then he won't be for us and we won't be for him. . . . The winning tactic for 1952, we believe, will be for the Republican Party to stand clearly for constitutional government and let the chips fall.

In September we published "How Eisenhower Can Win," and in October James Burnham's "The Case Against Adlai Stevenson." Mr. Burnham's case was an intellectual case: he took Mr. Stevenson at his own word — that he was not "temperamentally, physically, or mentally" equipped to make the momentous decisions of the next four years.

THAT WAS the new *Mercury's* contribution, in its formative months, to ending an era which began in 1933, gaily and confidently, which at home accomplished much that was good, which abroad furnished leadership and resolution for the Second World War, but which, as always, finally petered out in vacillation, corruption, and decay.

The *Mercury's* objective now is to publish the able thinkers and writers

who can give direction to the new era. Under Eisenhower America will not travel backward into some comfortable known; the movement will be forward into the dangerous and undefined unknown. Therefore, the need now is for responsible intellectuals, for enlightened conservatives, who can point the way and rally the hopes of mankind.

Understanding and resolution, these are first needs of the new era, and we began our contribution in the November issue with "A Positive Proposal for Korea" by Senator Styles Bridges. This proposal represents an inspiring order of statesmanship: it cuts across partisan positions, calls for understanding and agreement, and summons the free world to new resolution.

In both the November and the current, December, issues, as well as in the forthcoming January issue, we are publishing essays by James Burnham, demolishing the old defeatist policy of containment and calling for a new and effective order of American political warfare aimed at liberation.

In this issue, too, there is an article explaining how the United Nations may be converted into a useful base for waging political warfare on armed Communism.

Since the essential need is for ideas from which can spring new resolution, then the *Mercury's* task in 1953 is to find and present the ideas to those Americans who are willing to think.

James Burnham

CAN WASHINGTON CONDUCT POLITICAL WARFARE?

THREE FACTS are the only triangulation points by which a firm course of foreign policy can be charted in our time:

1. The world political system is in the midst of a transformation which goes beneath and beyond the limits of the national and colonial order that prevailed during the past several centuries.

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*Last month James Burnham argued in "The Primacy of Politics" that the containment program is based on two illusory assumptions: that Communism starts in the stomach and can be stopped by alleviating economic distress; and that if war does come, our superior military power will save us from the consequences of our political ineptitude. In this second of two articles taken from his forthcoming Containment or Liberation? (John Day), Mr. Burnham holds that the only alternative to unlimited nuclear warfare is an aggressive program of political warfare. Mr. Burnham's most recent book was The Coming Defeat of Communism.*

2. For the period of this transformation there is no clear line between war and peace. There are only different forms and stages of the continuous struggle for survival or dominance in the developing world system of the future.

3. The primary mode of the struggle is *political warfare*.

By "political warfare" I refer to methods of struggle other than those of formal military warfare, insofar as these methods are guided by a strategic objective.

Although they differ on its role, all military strategists agree that the advent of air power has added a "new dimension" to warfare's traditional land and sea. Outside of Communist circles, few military strategists or governmental leaders yet comprehend that another, a fourth dimension, more novel and decisive than the third, has simultaneously appeared. Air power alters the tactics and mechanics of war, but does

not bring any qualitative change in the nature of war, nor reach into any new layers of the human mind and spirit. Political warfare demands a radical shift in both conception and practice.

In thirty years (1921-51) Soviet-based Communism conquered China, the most heavily populated country on earth. This immense victory was won almost entirely with the weapons of political warfare. The amount and scale of formal fighting, the equipment used, and the casualties in the field were negligible in relation to such a goal. It is doubtful that the Communist high command spent as much as half a billion dollars on the whole thirty-year campaign, certainly less than a billion. From 1946 to the end of 1952 it took more than seven billion for the French to maintain a shaky stalemate in Indo-China. The United States has used much more than a billion merely to keep a thin line open to the single city of Berlin.

IN ACHIEVING the conquest of China, Stalin's political warfare included the following measures:

1. A clear policy, first laid down in Theses adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International (1920). This policy had the conquest of China as its unequivocal objective, in order both to add China's weight to the Communist side of the world balance, and to deprive the Western powers of a

major reserve of resources and manpower.

2. The organization of a trained cadre, an *apparatus*, which became the brain and backbone of the Chinese revolution. This was done by sending instructors and organizers from the Soviet Union into China, and by training tens of thousands of Chinese in special Soviet schools.

3. Carefully regulated Soviet pressures and infiltration, open and disguised. The Soviet emissaries ranged from military advisers to saboteurs to economists to spies to engineers. The infiltration extended deep into Chinese society. The pressures gradually gained strategic domination of the land approaches to China: Outer Mongolia; then Sinkiang; and, in the next-to-last phase, Manchuria.

4. Flexible Soviet diplomacy, which demanded here and yielded there, made or broke a treaty as opportunity suggested.

5. Skillful political handling of the Japanese war against China. The Japanese invasion of the mainland (Manchuria, then China proper) was parried in such a way that the threat to Soviet territory was minimized, the Chinese Nationalists undermined, and the Chinese Communists strengthened both materially and morally.

6. Shrewd exploitation of internal Chinese tensions. Agrarian (peasant) discontent was mobilized under Communist leadership. Wide strata

of the intellectuals, professionals, and bureaucrats were penetrated ideologically. Many of the merchants and businessmen were neutralized by fear, indirect bribery, or Pan-Asiatic and anti-foreign slogans.

7. Para-military and military operations, tailored to Chinese geographic, economic, and social conditions.

8. Soviet manipulation of the Western powers, first by entangling them in a Soviet-sparked "anti-Japanese front," and then by snatching key concessions from the conference tables at Teheran and Yalta.

9. Immobilization of Western public opinion by psychological means. In order to conquer China, the Communists had to prevent effective interference by the Western powers, in particular by the United States. This was accomplished by a psychological operation which exercised a controlling influence on Western, especially American, opinion concerning China, and by the actual penetration of relevant Western institutions, both governmental and private.

**D**URING the past few years the term "psychological warfare" has become familiar in the United States. Many popular articles have been written about it. Everyone seems to be "for it," and to agree that we ought to carry on vigorous psychological warfare against Communism and the Soviet Union.

As a matter of fact, what professes to be psychological warfare is being conducted on a rather large scale. Probably more than half of the budget of the Department of State goes to "PW," as psychological warfare is known to its familiars. The Army's special research organization, the Operations Research Office, spends many of its millions on psychological warfare, as does the Air Force's special organization, the Rand Corporation. The Air Force also works in the field through its Human Resources Research Institute. The Central Intelligence Agency has many psychological warfare tasks which are not publicly defined. In connection with the Marshall Plan and the Mutual Security Agency, huge and expensive psychological projects have been attempted abroad. All of the government's psychological warfare operations are supposed to be "co-ordinated" by the Psychological Strategy Board, which works under the direction of the National Security Council.

Outside of the government proper, the field of psychological warfare has been yielding a heavy crop of varied organizations, some semiofficial, some altogether private, which function both at home and internationally.

The United States is now spending what must total well over a billion dollars yearly on these products that are sold as "psychological war-



fare," and advertised, by those who are paid to turn them out, as high-grade anti-Communist medicine. Let us take a look at the contents as well as the label. Is this American brand of "psychological warfare" the genuine article? Does it actually function within the great new dimension of contemporary international struggle? — in other words, is it an authentic form of *political warfare*? Or is it, perhaps, a substitute for political warfare?

SOVIET POLITICAL WARFARE is an expression of *the will to defeat an enemy*. American "psychological warfare" is for the most part an expression of the wish to be loved — so profound a characteristic of American culture. In that contrast is summed up the fact that American psychological warfare is in reality not political warfare or, indeed, warfare in any sense.

A large part of American psychological warfare consists of an "information and education" program, carried out through radio, lectures, movies, books, libraries, student and teacher exchanges, reciprocal traveling, and so on. Its avowed purpose is to clear up "misunderstandings" and to correct "misinformation" concerning the United States. Its message (the Campaign of Truth vs. the Big Lie) is roughly the following:

"The Communists say that we are imperialists, reactionaries, warmong-

ers, and racists. They tell you that we exploit workers and farmers, lynch Negroes, drop germs on peaceful peasants, and plan to make an American colony out of all the world that we leave unatomized. It is not fair for them to say such things, and they are just not so. We Americans want peace and prosperity for all, and it is slander to suggest that we would ever start a war under any circumstances. We hardly ever lynch Negroes any more, and they can now even eat in restaurants and railroad dining cars — at least in some parts of the North. With the way progress is going, they will soon be able to register at hotels. We have never sought territorial gain, except where it is a question of defense or helping a young nation to grow up. We are ready to pay out billions of dollars to bring the benefits of our prosperity and way of life to everywhere in the world. At home, our workers are the richest and happiest anywhere, with cars and bathrooms and vacuum cleaners and television, and it is not true that they are exploited, and they want to be friends with everybody. As for our farmers, why should they want war when they have such big barns and fat cattle and broad fields? Our university graduates are not barbarians, like the Communists say, but they really like art and culture, and we are going to prove it to you by sending over *Oklahoma* and John Gunther and *Porgy and Bess* and *Captain*

from *Castile* and *Quo Vadis* and *Life's* reproductions of paintings. And our leaders are so friendly that they are ready to call you by your first name ten minutes after meeting you."

The curious assumption seems to be that others will love us if they see us as we really are. And why? The only evident reason is that they won't be able to help loving us because we so want to be loved. In their ardent youth, Americans have not yet learned the tragic lesson that the most powerful cannot be loved — hated, envied, feared, obeyed, respected, even honored perhaps, but not loved. Was not the Renunciation of Love the first step in the search for the Treasure of the Nibelungs?

Displayed on the high and opaque fence that surrounds the United States Consulate at Basra in Iraq I saw big photographs of Midwestern farms bursting with new buildings, machinery, and prize cattle. Are the starving and diseased Iraqi peasants and laborers who shuffle past that fence going to love us because they see that our farmers are so rich and well fed? The Marshall Plan propaganda has told the workers of France and Italy that the American standard of living is four times higher than the Soviet. Will those French and Italian workers, in their unpaired, cold, and grimy homes, love us because our workers ride to work in big cars and have steak three

times a week? Will ordinary Rumanians and Balts and Russians love us because we endlessly repeat we will never take the offensive against the regime that crushes them?

How preposterous to suppose that political attacks based on "the Negro question" can be quieted by quoting statistics on lynching and subsidized housing. The fact is (if it were relevant) that American racial tolerance is well above the world average. Not only is the United States far more tolerant and assimulative than countries like South Africa and Australia, with their special problems, but it is more so than many non-white nations such as Japan, China, and India. The Japanese speak contemptuously of the United States as a "mongrel nation." A Chinese family regards a child of mixed Chinese and white parentage as an outcast. Indians are so obsessed by the color question that young bachelors advertising for brides specify light color as a prime requirement.\* This is the fact, but facts have little to do with the political passions that are merely using the Negro and similar issues as adventitious symbols.

IT IS NOT ONLY the information and education part of the American program that expresses the pas-

\* Most inhabitants of India are of course themselves to be classified scientifically as whites. Subjectively, however, Indians usually identify themselves, though ambivalently, with non-whites.

sionate wish to be loved. "Friendly acts" are constantly being performed with the apparent expectation that these will lead to feelings in the recipients if not of love at least of gratitude. It is evidently forgotten how much more bitter it is to receive than to give.

In the late summer of 1952, Moslem pilgrims piled up in Beirut on the way to Mecca. The United States ran a "Magic Carpet" of airplanes to transport thousands of them free and comfortably. Undoubtedly this was done on the inspiration of one of the psychological warriors. Operation Magic Carpet was presumably part of the governmental campaign to "win the Moslem world to our side."

It would be churlish to object to this performance. Humanly speaking, it was a pleasant thing to do. It probably gave the pilots useful training. And I imagine that it made the Beirut authorities happy by getting the penniless pilgrims off their doorstep. At the same time it was almost certainly useless as a psychological warfare action. In the Moslem religion and culture, the feeling which Christians designate as "gratitude" does not exist. Islam teaches that all things, good and bad, come from Allah. The planes that took the pilgrims to Mecca appeared and functioned by and solely by the will of Allah. For that, the pilgrims no doubt gave due praise to Allah. It would have been sacrilegious and

indeed unthinkable for them to feel thanks, gratitude, or obligation toward the American pilots, generals or diplomats. These were the instrument that Allah happened to choose — in this case, *despised infidels*. If these Moslem pilgrims felt anything toward the Americans at all, it was probably nothing but distaste and ironic contempt.

So far as psychological warfare goes, the Arabs have been impressed lately not with the sporadic friendly acts but with the increasing signs that the infidels have grown weak and cowardly. The Christian dogs slink away from their possessions without a fight, and cringingly wait on a Moslem fanatic in his bed-chamber.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE" is a more imposing name for what used to be called "propaganda." Propaganda means the use of the media of communication for the purpose of influencing groups of people in accordance with predetermined political goals. The field of propaganda, though wide, is only a part or subdivision of political warfare. The outline given above of the methods used by the Communists in the conquest of China shows that many of the forms of political warfare are outside of what would usually be classified as propaganda.

It follows as a practical conclusion that the objectives of propaganda

cannot be successfully set beyond the range of general political warfare. The limits of political warfare are in turn fixed by a nation's overall foreign policy. Since 1947 the United States has pursued the policy of containment. American political warfare and American propaganda have therefore necessarily been confined within the perspectives of containment.

This relationship between part and whole is by no means self-evident. It seems to many persons that there is no reason why propaganda cannot perfectly well follow one policy while ordinary diplomacy, commerce, or military preparation follows quite another. It just does not work out that way. If the propaganda is completely out of line with actions taken in other fields, then no one believes the propaganda, and it has no effect. When Hitler went into Byelorussia and the Ukraine in 1941-42, his propaganda said that he arrived to free the peoples from Russian Bolshevism. Byelorussians and Ukrainians were ready to welcome him as a liberator. But when his Nazis treated the Byelorussians and Ukrainians as subhumans, the propaganda was disregarded. It serves no purpose for the Voice of America or Radio Free Europe to tell the Czechs and Poles that America stands for their freedom, if at the same time the State Department keeps officially repeating that it is

always ready to negotiate with a "sincere" Moscow or Peiping on the basis of the present boundaries of the Iron Curtain. Because containment offers no solution for the chief problems of Europe and Asia, and only the prospect of eternal enslavement to the peoples of the Soviet Empire itself, there can be no effective American propaganda before the policy of containment has been abandoned, in action as well as in words.

The United States has made a certain effort to get around the dilemma thus indicated by what amounts to a trick. It has been thought possible for the nation to have two policies: a publicly avowed "overt" policy — the policy of containment, negotiations, and faith in the United Nations; and a secret or "covert" policy which would be much more strongly anti-Soviet, and would in some respects approximate a policy of liberation. The overt policy would govern diplomacy, official propaganda, and behavior at conferences. The covert policy would be carried out by special unacknowledged agencies, secret agents, and private organizations.

**B**UT analysis and experience prove this double deal to be impossible. One of two results follows: either the desired effect of the covert operations is cancelled out by the counter-influence of the overt actions; or the covert operations

degenerate into irresponsibility and adventurism.

Many private or semiofficial activities among exile groups have been caught on one of these horns. The Free Europe University in Exile, for example, was established through American support in 1951, with its resident center at Robert-sau, near Strasbourg. The student body is drawn from the exile youth of the East European captive nations. Implicit in the idea of this university is the perspective of liberation. In fact, the only motive for founding it would seem to be that of preparing selected young persons for the time when their countries will again be free. In practice, the general influence of the policy of containment has smothered the potential dynamism of the University in Exile beneath attitudes of timidity and negativism. In the appointment of staff and tutors, the relations with the neutralist French authorities, the selection of visiting lecturers, and the guidance of special studies, the political content is diluted with the sterile waters of containment. The institution tends to develop as a charity school instead of a fighting instrument of political warfare.

The so-called Kersten Amendment to the Mutual Security Act of 1951 authorized the expenditure of up to \$100 million "for any selected persons who are residing in or escapees from the Soviet Union,

Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, or the Communist-dominated or Communist-occupied areas of Germany and Austria, and any other countries absorbed by the Soviet Union either to form such persons into elements of the military forces supporting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or for other purposes. . . ." The debate over this provision showed that Congress' intent in passing it was to initiate the formation of exile military units. This purpose, like the University in Exile, presupposes the perspective of liberation, and goes counter to the policy of containment. Therefore the containment-committed Administration denied the plain meaning of the amendment (when the Soviet spokesmen attacked it in the United Nations) and sabotaged it in action. The whole business was surrounded by super-secrecy, in order to hide the fact that nothing positive was done except to give a little financial aid to refugees.

Most unofficial or semiofficial activities that depart from the dominant policy of containment simply do not get anywhere. Many of them, indeed, have folded up after bureaucratic flutter and money-spending. Some do show results, but, because these results are out of line with the central policy, they are isolated episodes, anarchic, and

often adventurist. This was strikingly illustrated by the disclosure, in October, 1952, of the German "resistance" group which American "secret agents" had subsidized, trained and armed. The mission of the group was supposed to be resistance activity in the case of Soviet invasion. It was brought out that the group's plans began with the assassination of eighty leading and respectable members of the West German Social Democratic Party.

IN THE SPRING of 1952, an East European political leader came to see me. He is one of the chiefs of the anti-Communist resistance of his country, and since 1942 has been a liaison officer between the internal resistance and the exiles outside. What he told me was in sum the following:

"Something must be done to avert disaster to my country. Americans are sending individuals inside on quick "one-shot" assignments. Someone from ——— [he named a certain organization] will approach an exile and say, 'Make a quick trip inside, get a news story for broadcast use, and we will give you a thousand dollars and a passage out of Europe.' The man goes in. His mission makes no sense, and he has no political or organizational responsibility. Because he is never going back again, he doesn't take precautions or cover his tracks. He just aims to get in and out as fast as he

can. The consequence is that his trail betrays the members of our own internal organization. Sometimes, through carelessness or indifference, he exposes our people; sometimes they, knowing that he comes from outside, feel it their duty to help him and are exposed in the process. Afterwards the police use the obvious traces of his visit as an excuse for repressions."

He went on: "You cannot conduct resistance operations in this cloak-and-dagger adventurist manner. The building of a serious resistance movement in my country or in any Soviet-held nation requires two things. First, there must be a firm policy commitment by your government. Your government must find ways to make it plainly known to the people inside that the United States does not accept the present arrangements as final but stands unambiguously for the liberation of the subject nations of the Soviet Empire. The captive people as a whole, the nation, must feel certain that sooner or later they will be free. All the people, the nation itself, not isolated individuals, must be made the social base of the resistance. Second, the resistance activities, so far as they are possible at each given stage, cannot be carried out as private adventures or commercial purchases. They must be politically and organizationally co-ordinated by a responsible center which includes representatives both

of your government and of the captive nation in question."

IN TESTIMONY before the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security, Professor David N. Rowe of Yale University mentioned the following incident: "I called for a sophisticated, important, and formidable program of political warfare. . . . When I put this up to Mr. [George] Kennan . . . Kennan said, 'That is impossible. We can't do that kind of thing; we don't have people with the kind of know-how to conduct sophisticated political warfare.' "\*

The reply from the formulator of the policy of containment is revealing. If Kennan's remark is interpreted to mean that "people with the kind of know-how to conduct sophisticated political warfare" have not been working for the United States government, I believe his statement to be accurate — though not quite for the reasons which Kennan would doubtless give.

Competence in anti-Communist political warfare comprises two quite different factors. One of these is technical: specific abilities at one or more of a wide range of activities, from coining slogans or guerilla fighting to electronics and explosives. The second is a sufficient knowledge and profound rejection of Communism. Competence of this

\* *Hearings* on the Institute of Pacific Relations, p. 3990.

double sort has neither existed in Washington nor been sought. Insofar as Washington has been fighting the Soviet-based world Communist enterprise, it has been trying to do so without anti-Communists.

The divisions of the State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, Psychological Strategy Board, Mutual Security Agency, and other offices supposedly carrying on political warfare are staffed for the most part by routine bureaucrats, or by persons arbitrarily transferred from unrelated tasks. Those who are recruited from civilian life, though sometimes able enough in their own right, are seldom trained technicians in fields related to political warfare. They are usually stock brokers, academic social scientists, lawyers, investment bankers, members of café or conventional society out for a fling at secret missions and Washington salons, or unattached "administrators."

Even the highest technical ability is not enough for effective anti-Communist political warfare. The essential lack in Washington has been of knowledge and passion: lack of a thorough understanding of Communism and of an unwavering commitment to fight against it; lack even of a realization that such understanding and commitment are necessary.

Men and women with this knowledge and commitment exist in the United States, in the other non-



Communist countries, and among the exiles from the Soviet Empire. But few are in Washington, or working for or with the agencies of the United States government.

How are we to explain this seeming paradox, the fact that so few anti-Communists are to be found in the headquarters of the world struggle against Communism? The answer lies partly in the American character, partly in a temporary cultural lag, the carry-over of attitudes and ideas developed in an earlier period to a time when they are no longer appropriate.

The circumstances of American history have promoted the strong anti-ideological tendency so marked in most Americans. The American aim is *to do a job*, and the man who has done a job becomes the admired man. Doing the job is not surrounded by theory and moralizing. In government, as in American life generally, the typical American is the "pragmatic" man.

Though not impossible, it is difficult for a person who has no feeling for ideology to comprehend an enterprise like Communism. He tries to make it fit under some "practical" category with which he is familiar — "political party" or "gang" or "aggressor nation." Because Communism has in reality nothing in common with what the practical man understands by party, gang, or nation, he remains *ignorant*.

But he is unaware that he is ignorant, and impatient with anyone who suggests that he must learn more if he is to conduct an effective struggle against Communism and the Soviet power.

Along with the non-ideological majority there has also been, in the United States government, especially in the agencies with some relation to foreign affairs, an ideologized minority. The fact that the majority is not ideologized has given this minority an influence much in excess of its relative numbers. It has set the prevailing tone of the State Department and the various intelligence agencies.

The leading carriers of this ideology are men who were born between 1900 and 1914 — the generation and in many cases the one-time colleagues of Alger Hiss. The ideas and attitudes of these men were shaped in the context of the economic depression of the thirties and the political struggle against Hitler and Nazism. The depression left them disillusioned with traditional American capitalism. "Antifascism" became the core of their political being, a passion as well as an intellectual attitude. In part, their antifascism was a native product of "liberalism" (in the American populist sense). In part, though most of them did not realize this, the specific content of their antifascism was moulded by Communist pressures. Disguised and skillfully guided by

the Popular Front strategy, these worked on them through a hundred channels — the magazines they read, the plays and movies they saw, books they discussed, organizations they joined, conferences they attended, and sometimes the man in the next office or at the next seat around the dinner table.

THEIR VISION of the contemporary world and the forces active within it was subtly distorted — concerning the causes of fascism, the nature of colonialism, the history of the Russian revolution, the laws of economic life, the meaning of art and religion, the process of education, and so much else. At the same time, deep feelings were stirred within them, and attitudes fixed so firmly that it demands an extreme crisis to undo them. Only a few of them became outright Communists or Soviet agents — though in that atmosphere those few could accomplish much. But many of them were brought to believe that the Communists were *allies* — allies, and even leaders, in the common fight against what was worst, against Hitler and Nazism. Communism was not like fascism, not wholly evil as fascism was, because — they were taught without knowing that they were being taught — Communism “has the same ideals that we have, even if we differ on methods.” And their political passion, their hatred, was concentrated and directed

against Nazism. Other political things — nations or churches or even Communism — they might intellectually disagree with and practically reject. It was only about Nazism that they *felt* strongly.

This complex of ideas and attitudes prevailed, appropriately enough, through the period of war in alliance with Stalin against Hitler. Suddenly, in 1946, the men formed in that ideological pattern, occupying the key posts of government, were confronted through a sharp turn of history’s wheel by a task never dreamt of in their philosophy. Now they were called on to be leaders in the fight against their former associates, the Communists, and against “the great Soviet experiment.” Small wonder that there have been dismay, stumbling, and confusion! Small wonder that hard anti-Communists are not welcome at their side — for they were taught to regard all hard anti-Communists as “fascists at heart.”

The Washington atmosphere of these recent years was perfectly expressed by the highest foreign policy officer, the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, when he declined to turn his back on a Soviet agent.\* This act was not isolated but typical. Acheson’s friends and associates, the members of his former

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\* There would have been nothing to comment on if Acheson had been acting merely as an individual in relation to an individual friend, Alger Hiss. So to act, he would, of course, have had to resign as Secretary of State.

law firm (to which he returns whenever he is out of a government job), collected thousands of dollars for the Hiss defense funds, and still number Alger Hiss's brother Donald, accused by the same witness of the same acts, among their partners. At Washington dinners and cocktail parties held or attended by State Department and intelligence officials, no bitterness or contempt was ever expressed against Alger Hiss. At those same gatherings no vile and shameless slander against Whittaker Chambers was omitted.

IN ESTIMATING basic attitudes, psychology suggests as the most accurate rule: by their emotions shall ye know them. Whom does a man hate, whom does he love, at what is he bitter, toward whom tolerant? George Kennan is unquestionably anti-Soviet and from a rational standpoint anti-Communist. Nowhere in his published writings, however, does one ever find expressed in the texture of his style a powerful emotion concerning Communism, a hatred of Communism. The analysis and rejection, which are there, are always pale and abstract. Yet Kennan does express emotion in his writing, sometimes strongly. This emotion is invariably directed against the same target — the “politicians, commentators, and publicity-seekers of all sorts” who offer “counsels of impatience and hatred” in place of the “counsels of

moderation . . . deluging in noise and filth anyone who gets in their way . . . fanning . . . mass emotions and . . . sowing . . . bitterness, suspicion, and intolerance”:\* in less fancy words, the anti-Communist critics of the Acheson regime in the State Department.

In the Acheson climate the winds were predictable. It could always be foretold that they would blow cold and stormy against those who instituted and conducted, against any “friendly” witness who aided, the Internal Security Subcommittee’s steady probing into the Communist and pro-Communist infiltration of American life, against the ex-Communists who gave direct and sorrowful testimony to the working of the world conspiracy. Equally certain were the soft breezes of excuse, “explanation,” tolerant defense or easy denial for a William Remington (convicted of perjury for denying that he was a Communist, and up for retrial on a technicality) or a John Stewart Service (indicted in the *Amerasia* theft of classified government documents and finally in 1952 dismissed from the State Department by order of the Civil Service Loyalty Review Board).

The American foreign policy of the anti-Nazi epoch, which has carried over into the early years of the anti-Communist age, has another characteristic that bears on the possibility of effective political war-

\* *American Diplomacy, 1900-50*, p. 62.

fare. The policy has been conducted without *honor*. There are some who say that honor in politics went out with feudalism, and breathed its last when faithless Louis XI beat the chivalric Charles of Burgundy. Surely there has been a post-Renaissance honor that lasted, if with deviations, well into the nineteenth century, and has not yet wholly disappeared from the world. The recent directors of American foreign policy, however, do not seem to recognize any claims of honor.

CONSIDER, for example, American relations with France from 1940-47. Who was one's friend, ally, colleague? Pétain for a while, according to all official behavior. Then Giraud. Then Giraud ditched for Darlan. Then Darlan renounced in *memoir*, and De Gaulle "used" for his influence on the growing Resistance and as a symbol of the French nation. And then, after he had "served his purpose," the stubbornly unservile De Gaulle thrown aside for the more flexible-kneed socialists and centrists of the postwar "Third Force." Or think of Draja Mihailovitch, the first in Yugoslavia to fight for freedom and the West, against both forms of totalitarianism. American money and arms were diverted to the Communist terrorist, Tito, to help him subvert, defame, and murder Mihailovitch.

What of Angus Ward, stalwart member of the government's own

Foreign Service, who after rotting a year in Chinese Communist custody was banished by Acheson to Africa? Or William Oatis, permitted without reprisal to be framed and jailed by Czech Communists, and left to grow old in prison while Czech diplomats continue to be received at the White House? Or the thousands — literally thousands — of other Americans in Communist jails and slave camps? What of the dozens of Berlin anti-Communists who, kidnapped by Soviet agents from their homes in the United States sector, vanish forever into the torture cells of the Communist zone? What of General Anders, who formed and led the Polish Third Army out of the depths of Russia, through the Middle East, to the slopes of Monte Cassino and the Gothic Line? and General Bor-Komorowski, the leader of the incredible Warsaw rising deliberately sabotaged by the Red Army at the city gates? These Poles are outcasts, while the leaders of the United States government drink and eat and confer with Moscow's Polish stooges.

Would it not have been found unseemly by our grandfathers that American leaders should negotiate, discuss, and shake hands with the same men who in their next breath defile the air with their tales of "American germ warfare" and "medical experiments"?

Machiavelli insisted that "states

are not run by prayerbooks," and I do not wish to pretend that a modern government in the complex modern world can act like a Don Quixote on the bright field of honor. But honor still has a place in the relations among human beings. You can buy agents, but not friends or allies or comrades; and when you buy you always risk being outbid. If the United States is to succeed in political warfare against Soviet Communism, it must have friends who are firm under all circumstances, even the blackest, who are ready to go through to the end. Surely a man of honor is most likely to find

such friends. If we do not ourselves honor our own words, who will honor them?

I CONCLUDE this inquiry into the question whether the United States can conduct effective anti-Communist political warfare with doubt. The human and material resources are available. But it is not clear whether the nation possesses the necessary temperament, insight, and will. Of one conclusion we may be certain: political warfare, dynamically carried out and vast in scale, is the only alternative to unlimited nuclear war.

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## ***Containment — 1917***

» Washington was bewildered, confused, and angered by the Bolshevik coup. Rather than shake itself awake and come to grips with reality, the Administration at first tried to ignore the existence of Lenin's government. But the failure of the counterattacks by Kerensky and the Moscow Committee of Safety indicated that the Bolsheviks could not be wished away. Yet the policy ultimately formulated by Washington was based in part on the assumption that Lenin would miraculously disappear, and that the Soviet Government would — because it should — collapse.

WILLIAM APPLEMAN WILLIAMS, *in* AMERICAN RUSSIAN RELATIONS (1781-1947), Rinehart & Co., New York, 1952.

## LETTER FROM NEW ORLEANS:

# *Dixie—The Thing Itself*

Peter de Mendelssohn

AT THE BOTTOM of Canal Street, New Orleans' long and wide main thoroughfare, close by the ferry which takes one across the Mississippi to the industrial suburb of Algiers, two Negro shoeshine boys had installed themselves in an archway. Their poster, a piece of brown packing paper covered with clumsy charcoal writing, said: "The people of this city accuse us of making their shoes look like glass. We are not the best. But there are none better. Come for a trial under the archway."

I discovered this poster all by myself, on my first morning in New Orleans, in fact (it is hard to miss), but was later told that it is a well-known and cherished landmark of the city. That morning I found it amusing and touching. At the end of my visit I felt that in all its paradoxical absurdity it was also very true. Negroes speaking on behalf of

their much maligned fellow blacks; but somehow it seemed also to enclose all the strident stress and strain, all the thrust and power, all the color, majesty, and self-assurance of this old and fast-growing American city, in a neat, tight-fitting nutshell.

Not far away, in Royal Street, or Rue Royale as it used to be, in the heart of the old French city, I came across what must be the most chaotic secondhand bookshop in all America, an unbelievable jumble of old maps, etchings, books, pamphlets, ancient newspapers and all manner of bits and pieces of historic interest. Among so great a variety of goods I was not surprised to find also some neckties on display, illustrated ties, of course, as are now the fashion. But these particular ties did not show birds, flowers, naked girls and colorful abstract designs, but a kind of star-spangled banner, only with too few stars on it. A note next to it explained: "The South will rise again. Buy and wear your Confederate tie now."

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Peter de Mendelssohn, the well-known British journalist, has just completed an extensive trip through the United States.

This separatist piece of neckwear costs two dollars. The bookseller admitted with a smile that it was hardly more than a joke. Of course, there is still a handful of obstinate, die-hard separatists, advocating the South's secession from the Union, but they were cranks taken seriously by no one, not even by themselves. And it was easy to see why, even for the most casual visitor. The days when New Orleans was the forgotten city of the United States, when the North and Middle West allowed the Deep South, with all its undeveloped material riches and its buried cultural tradition, to fall into decay and oblivion, when most Americans scarcely knew where New Orleans was and very few ever went there — these days are clearly gone.

TODAY NEW ORLEANS is referred to only in passing as the city which gave birth to hot jazz and invented the cocktail. It has become pointless and unnecessary to proclaim that the South will rise again. It has risen, and is still rising. The only revolution which was possible here, took place during the past ten years. In this decade the city's metropolitan area grew by a full quarter, making it the third largest city in the United States.

The transformation is spectacular. One-eighth of the world's oil reserves and one-fifth of its known natural gas deposits are situated within a radius of 150 miles from the

city's center. Theoretically, therefore, the oil industry of New Orleans could buy the entire state out of the Union at the price of ten days' work. That is what they paid to Napoleon 150 years ago. If it wished. If the Confederate neckties had any significance. But the two shoeshine boys are right, more so than they themselves probably know. Their slogan seems to be written all over this city; we do not claim to be the best, the largest, the most beautiful city of America. But is there one better, larger, more beautiful?

With the possible exception of San Francisco, I do not think there is. New Orleans is unique in a very American sense of the word: unique by the riches of its past, and by the inestimable riches of its potential future. It has seen more and experienced more than any other American city. It is nearly 250 years old and it carries more history on its back than any of its sisters, and yet gives one the feeling that it is only now really beginning to live. Its first great era rises most vividly before one as you wander through the thirty-odd little streets of the Vieux Carré, the original French settlement which Adrien de Pauger laid out with the help of eighty illicit salt merchants deported from France, and to which Abbé Prevost sent his unhappy lovers. And that the city's second great era has come and is here, anyone can see who takes a walk through modern New Orleans;

it is a sprawling mass enclosing the tiny ancient kernel, which the traditionalist Creole inhabitants of the Vieux Carré used to call, not so long ago, the American City, as distinct from their own graceful, aristocratic miniature Faubourg St. Honoré. Or if one takes a motor launch trip through the port, ten miles up river or fifteen down, the docks and warehouses, the grain elevators and oil storage tanks, the huge new industrial plants of Chrysler and Henry Kaiser on either bank of the river, never leave a gap in the skyline.

BUT HOWEVER fascinated the economist may be by this spectacle, he is never allowed to forget that New Orleans is, in fact, two cities, and that it has two things which no other American city has. It stands on the threshold between two continents; it is a pan-American city. Secondly, it is neither wholly American nor distinctly European, but an amalgam which stands supremely in its own right. It is a world city carrying the common history and the common destiny of both Europe and America, fused and blended in 250 years of adventure, extravagance, high spirits, violence and generosity to a homogeneous whole, compared to which New York is a discordant jumble of unassimilated elements, and Washington, with all its genuine cosmopolitanism, little more than a bland, smooth surface. But above all, New Orleans is the heart

of Dixie. And Dixie is living history in the European sense of the word.

The origins of the term Dixie seem obscure. Most probably it dates back to the time of the flatboat men, the crude, boisterous, illiterate and fighting-mad Mississippi skippers, to Mike Fink, Bill Sedley and Giant Annie Christmas who, at the beginning of the last century, paid the piper in the city of sin and called its noisy and often murderous tune. A few years after the Louisiana Purchase, at a time when the American monetary system was in complete chaos, one of the New Orleans banks began issuing ten-dollar notes, one side of which was printed in English, the other in French. On the latter was the French word for ten: d-i-x. Since the correct pronunciation of French was not one of the accomplishments of the flatboat ruffians from the North — whom the refined Creoles contemptuously lumped together as “Kaintocks,” the barbarians from Kentucky — one of these notes was known simply as a dix, and collectively they were dixies. Soon the name applied to the city as well, and with the Civil War to the entire South.

Dixie, then, sounding so unmistakably American, is French. But in truth, it is no more French than New Orleans itself, where today almost nothing is French except the name. The street names in the Vieux Carré have all been Anglicised; the Rue Royale has become Royal Street,

Rue Bourbon, Bourbon Street, and the same has happened to the Rue St. Pierre, Chartres, Conde, Dauphine and St. Louis, although for sentimental reasons the old French name is sometimes written underneath. Most of the delightful restaurants, large and small and without exception serving fabulously good food, bear their old French names, but the few French-speaking waiters at Antoine's, Galatoire's, or Broussard's are French Canadians who have drifted south; and the last French-language newspaper, an anachronistic weekly sheet, died years ago from want of readers.

INDEED, it was quite a shock to me to discover that the houses in the Vieux Carré are not really French either. The elegant front of Madame Pontalba's Buildings, the lovely row of perfectly proportioned windows of Faisendieu's and Seignouret's mansions, Madame Lalourie's Haunted House, the "Perfect Stairway" of No. 623 Toulouse Street, the cool, dusky courtyards of the Patio Royal and Patti's Court, the delicate green shutters set against paling ochre and rain-washed pink, and the unbelievable multitude of wrought and cast iron balconies and delicate lattice work — this infinite variety of lazy colonial charm and graceful European sophistication slumbering in the afternoon light of the subtropical sun is breathtaking in its stately design; but it is not French. Old New Orleans was twice

destroyed by fire in the eighteenth century and it was rebuilt, as we see it now, by the Spaniards, but their most thoughtful and enterprising governor had a French name, Carondelet. One of the city's largest avenues is called after him, and rightly so. He gave New Orleans its first street lighting and drove the alligators from the muddy gutters.

There are only two places where French is still spoken — out on the plantations and among the bayous of Louisiana's Evangeline County, where the older generation hangs on to it, and in the innumerable cabarets, night clubs, dance and striptease halls of Bourbon Street, where it survives in the form of Creole songs. Here at the Mardi Gras Club, you can still hear that indestructible old-timer of early jazz days, venerable chocolate-brown Lizzie Miles, sing with broken voice the great blues of Basin Street. She calls it "Bassin Rue," once "heaven on earth," to the thunderous applause of enraptured listeners, while outside the shore patrols of the United States Navy pass in search of innocent sailors in not so innocent company, and a streetcar pushes its way down crowded Bourbon Street, turning the corner into Royal Street and making off toward a district actually called Desire. Only it is a streetcar no longer but an ordinary bus, with white passengers in front and black in the rear; and "Bassin Rue," which in the days of Kate Townsend, Hat-

tie Hamilton, and Fanny Sweet must have been the world's most prosperous street of sin, vice and gambling, was broken up and renamed a good many years ago.

Spanish then are the houses of old New Orleans, Spanish the lovely courtyards properly called patios, and Spanish is today the most spoken language next to English. South American sailors are everywhere. True, that historic little wooden shack, Jean Lafitte's, the freebooter's smithy, announces from a scarcely legible wooden plate that it now houses "*L'ambassade de la Commune Libre du Vieux Montmartre*" in Paris, but outside it no two Americans can agree how the city's name should be pronounced; some call it "New Orlins," others "New Orleans." Only the delivery van standing outside the garden restaurant of the Court of Two Sisters has written on it, "Nouvelle Orleans"; but can the driver pronounce it? Inside, by candle light under giant palm and plane trees standing breathlessly still in the windless summer night, the little black waiter serving us with gumbo soup, soft shell crab and shrimp creole, confessed he found the climate hard to bear. He was from Chicago and longed to go back. The head waiter, on the other hand, a young white man, was born two streets away and would live nowhere else.

But does it matter, I asked myself, among this unique fusion of

sleepy nostalgia and rumbustious energy? What makes the rest of America so disturbing to the European, namely, the violent contrast between the ageless antiquity of the landscape and the extreme, almost thoughtless youth of its people, does not worry one here. That is why you fall so easily and unreservedly in love with New Orleans. Here you may scrape the surface and not come immediately upon virgin rock. You come upon human history, layer upon layer, from Jean Baptiste le Moyne de Bienville, Louisiana's first governor who founded the city, on a day in May, 1717, to the fantastic Huey Long and his colossal Mississippi bridge. In the still noon hour, standing in front of the lovely wrought iron balcony of the Maison Seignouret, I found it easy to feel time flow away, wave after wave, to imagine myself in the dancing years of the quadroon girls, and back again another step among the flatboat men, the gamblers, Bricktop Jackson and Bridget Fury, those renowned women toughs, the scarlet ladies of Basin Street, the Voodoo Queens of imperishable memory. And back another step, it was not hard to visualize what Manon Lescaut and Des Grieux saw when they first arrived with the deported convict women. It is all still there. Only of Robert Cavelier, *Sieur de la Salle*, I found scarcely a reminder. The heroic and pathetic silhouette of the man who planted the Bourbon lilies

on the very spot where New Orleans stands today, is even now almost lost in the dusk of Louisiana's age.

That is how it goes. La Salle had the vision and perished. All that has remained of him is the name of a motor car. And this is very much in evidence. For New Orleans, on a hot midsummer night, is a loud, unrestrained, noisy city, and it is loud not only in noises. The sweltering pandemonium which receives the midnight traveler upon arrival at the railway station is most truthfully reproduced in the opening shots of Tennessee Williams' *Street-car* film. It is loud also in colors, in gestures and movements. But the riot of lights in Canal Street and the extravagance of sound and gesture in Bourbon Street fuse into something which, unlike anything in America, has charm and grace, suppleness and a curious whimsical subtlety. For a long time I wondered about this, and I thought I discovered it after I had spent the third night running in a small place in Bourbon Street.

WHAT WAS THIS? There I sat for hours, spellbound, listening to the most ear-splitting uproar of music I have ever heard. It was Fred Coleman's Negro band of local New Orleans genuine Dixie hot-jazz players. These direct descendants of the great Louis Armstrong and Paul Whiteman are surely the most prodigious noise-makers on earth.

They charge \$1.10 for a drink, and then leave you listening, if you can stand the pace, until dawn. But as you come out, the miracle is you feel neither stunned nor deaf. I felt charmed, bewitched, exhilarated, light-hearted — in short, I felt good. And suddenly I thought I understood the secret of New Orleans' noisy enchantment.

It is the Negroes who produce it. There are 250,000 of them in this town. Every third man, woman or child is a Negro, but whatever the other two may think they are doing and feeling, it is their black, disfranchised, downtrodden fellow-citizens who make the milieu. It is their exuberant sensuousness, the suppleness of their movements, the high-pitched delicacy of their voices, their laughter, their grace and charm which have wedded themselves so well to the laughter and the grace and the charm of the old aristocratic French city. It is, I think, essentially they, curiously enough, who have kept its spirit a living tradition, who embody and carry on its history and human continuity, and who have, ever present and ever insisting, prevented the modern Kaintocks and flatboat men from Detroit and Minneapolis from drowning New Orleans in oil and the noise of machinery and more oil and more machinery. That is, I think, what makes the heart of Dixie so unique in America. It is unlike anything else. For it is the thing itself.

William Bradford Huie

SEVEN WAYS TO SAVE THE UN

ONE OF THE FIRST TASKS of the new American administration will be to salvage the United Nations. For the world's "last best hope for peace" is foundering. Even as its sandwich-like home along New York's East River is completed, the UN is drifting helplessly, and it can be relieved only by stern and intelligent measures.

Both a grand jury and a Senate committee have shown the UN to be a refuge for many of the old Communist hands who have been driven from our own government. In the new "international civil service," these people, together with their comrades from the Soviet bloc, form a hard-core minority that is frustrating the efforts of a big, freedom-supporting majority.

The American people, who furnish almost half the money and employees, are losing both confidence and interest in the UN. The radio networks, newspapers, and magazines now give it scant coverage; and the semiofficial magazine, *United Nations*

World, estimated in July, 1952, that only 39 per cent of the American people are now favorably inclined toward the UN.

The majority of Americans simply do not want to think about the UN. A small minority on the extreme right would like to torpedo it; and an equally small minority on the left blame its failures on the United States. Of the rest of us who maintain any interest, perhaps a majority have reached the shrug-and-sigh stage. If the UN asked for a vote of confidence this year, it would fall for lack of support.

And this, *really*, would be a pity. For the UN is a potentially powerful device in freedom's battle to disarm Communism. It is an opportunity waiting to be exploited by wise and realistic men on our side. It is a base from which able Americans can wage the superior brand of political warfare by which we can hope to disarm our enemies without actual war. The UN should be saved; and here's how our new government can save it.

1. *Change the United States representatives.*

THE AMERICANS who have been responsible for our ineffective representation at UN include, most prominently, President Truman, Secretary of State Acheson, Philip Jessup, and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. The President, of course, is in the process of being replaced, and it is assumed that all the others will be replaced.

The United States delegation, generally, has been ineffective. Most of the members have lifetime records of having misjudged the nature of the Communist conspiracy. Either they were for Soviet recognition in 1933 as a measure to promote peace; or they favored the imposition of coalition governments on Poland and China in 1946 as a measure to promote peace; or they aided Alger Hiss in drawing up the UN charter: the charter which brands totalitarian fascists as enemies of peace and freedom but welcomes totalitarian Communists as friends.

That this delegation would be inept was foreseen by Senator William J. Fulbright on December 20, 1945, when he complained that the nominations had been rushed through the Foreign Relations Committee in "a few minutes in the presence of only three senators."

"The President is using this delegation," Senator Fulbright charged, "to reward individuals who have no

special qualifications, and this may give the impression to other nations that we don't have any better men or else we don't take the UN seriously."

Mr. Acheson's replacement at the UN, if he is to be successful, must be a tough-minded politician who understands the nature of the enemy. The Soviets are not humanitarians; they are politicians. They don't want to feed the world; they want to dominate it. They don't want to give land to peasants; they want to rob them. They don't want to use the UN to promote peace; they want to promote tension and discord. They are the hand-tooled instruments of totalitarian tyranny, and we must oppose them with abler and more resolute politicians.

2. *Accept the fact that the UN, as presently constituted, contains the enemy within it.*

THE UN was erected on a false assumption; that it was a society of friends, each of whom wanted to promote a free and peaceful world. Much of the disillusionment has derived from this false assumption.

Why do our Communist enemies participate in the UN? Because they want peace? Of course not. They are there on orders to disrupt. Here is a resolution adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International:

The Communist Party enters a bourgeois parliament [like the UN]

not to participate organically in its activities, but to undermine the parliament from within. . . . Every Communist representative in a parliament is required to realize that he is not a "legislator" searching for agreement with other legislators, but an agitator of the party sent to the camp of the enemy in order to carry out the decisions of the party.

That is Communist doctrine. That is why Vishinsky is always "dashing the hopes for peace." That is why he makes three-hour orations laughing at disarmament proposals and "increasing tensions." He is not sent there to co-operate, but to agitate.

Why then do the free nations tolerate the Communist agitators in the UN? Why not force them out?

The answer is that this is exactly what may happen, but for the present it may be wise strategy to leave them in the UN and try to damage them there politically with superior *diplomatic maneuver*.

The United States has suffered so long from inferior diplomacy that many of us are apt to assume that it will always be so. During the past twenty years our diplomats, employed to hinder the cause of the enemy, have actually *aided* his cause. But it need not always be so. If we can now rear up a few real statesmen to maneuver for the cause of freedom, the UN may be the arena in which they can inflict real damage on the enemy.

But if the UN is disappointing,

why doesn't the United States withdraw from it?

This is the most unrealistic suggestion of all. The United States shouldn't desert any more arenas of conflict with Communism. We should use the UN to damage the cause of Communism, and if anyone is to be driven out it should be the Communists.

But at present the enemy is within the UN; and since the UN is housed in New York, the enemy is within our own national gates. And this means risk. But the risk can be minimized if we understand what we are doing, if we choose proper representatives to engage the enemy, and if we impose the indicated restrictions on the movements and activities of the enemy.

3. *Identify all UN representatives and employees.*

THE UN is now a burgeoning bureaucracy of about 4,500 persons, in all capacities, spending about \$600,000,000 a year. Of this, the American contribution is about 2,000 persons and \$266,000,000.

Once we have recognized that the enemy is within the UN, then it follows that all the Americans in it must be clearly dissociated from the enemy. Our new delegation will insist on the discharge of all Americans in any capacity at the UN whose previous political activities and/or associations make them properly suspect.

Then, as long as the UN meets inside the boundaries of the United States, it is proper that our government be furnished by the UN a complete file containing the names, numbers, and records of all personnel.

We will not be violating any legitimate hopes for peace by insisting on *identification* at the UN. If this necessitates some change in the UN regulations, particularly the unrealistic Rule 56, then our delegation should press for such a change.

4. *Restrict the movements of all Communists connected with the UN.*

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE will lose patience with the UN if it continues to be a haven for unidentified enemy agents. Maintaining the UN in New York is a calculated risk on the part of this country, and prudence dictates that the risk be minimized.

No American, not even our ambassador, enjoys the privilege of unrestricted movement in a Communist nation. Therefore, once all UN personnel have been correctly identified, then the government of the United States should carefully define the conditions under which the enemy agents and sympathizers can remain in the United States.

These agents are now free to travel as they choose.

This must be changed; our new administration, undoubtedly, will move to change it; and it is difficult

to believe our friends, the smaller nations in the UN, will not support us.

5. *Insist that some UN meetings be held behind the Iron Curtain.*

OUR OLD and futile UN delegation has eschewed the best of all the propaganda gambits: why haven't we insisted that UN meetings be held in Moscow and Prague? That would be a good move.

Insistence on meetings in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia would cause consternation among the Communists. They value their seats in the UN; they can't withdraw very easily; so how can they explain to their people a refusal to entertain the UN? If the Soviet Union is the great advocate of peace, how can it deny its hospitality to the organization seeking peace?

6. *Require that the Reds and all other member nations pay their fair share of UN expense.*

THE UN propagandists like to claim that the UN costs the American people "only ten cents a head." This refers to our assessment of about \$15,000,000 a year for the *regular UN budget*, of which we pay 36.9 per cent and the Soviet Union pays 9.85 per cent.

But this refers only to the regular budget. It does not take into account the proliferating Specialized Agencies, where the amounts get much larger, as do the percentages contributed by the United States.

And the amount contributed by the Soviet Union is usually nothing.

This situation led to the remark by Senator Alexander Wiley that it looked to him as if the \$47,000,000 UN rabbit was fathering a \$300,000,000 litter, because the proposed United States contribution to the UN for 1953 is about \$340,000,000.

In the UN's Expanded Program of Technical Assistance the United States puts up 60 per cent of the money, while the Soviet Union spends nothing.

The UN's International Children's Emergency Fund, known as UNICEF, is generally regarded as the soundest and most worth while of the Specialized Agencies. Of the total of about \$130,000,000 which it has spent, the United States has contributed about \$81,000,000.

To illustrate how the propaganda works, in her column on November 17, 1951, Mrs. Roosevelt reproached Congress and the American people for not having made a special gift to UNICEF.

On the date that Mrs. Roosevelt complained of our stinginess, the United States was bearing 60 per cent of all the costs of UNICEF, and Mrs. Roosevelt made no mention of the fact that the Soviet Union was contributing not a nickel.

All agencies of the UN cost the United States at least \$266,000,000 in 1952. Proponents of the UN hope to raise this to more than \$340,000,000 in 1953, which would likely

be more than half of total UN expenditures.

We can purchase neither respect nor hope for peace by allowing the UN to be an American gravy train. Purely in the interest of UN effectiveness, our new government and our new UN delegation must insist that every member nation pay its fair share of the *total* cost.

7. *Resist the UN's tendency to concern itself with economics rather than politics.*

THE SECURITY COUNCIL was designed to be the most important agency of the UN. This is the 11-member body which is charged with responsibility for the maintenance of international peace. Any one of the great powers can veto any action by this council. Because the Russians were not present in the council at the beginning of the Korean war, the aggression was formally resisted by UN action. The Russians returned a month later, and since then they have vetoed all consideration of Korea.

With the Security Council ineffective, the General Assembly has become a futile debating society; and, therefore, the third of UN's six principal organs now plays the most important role. This is the Economic and Social Council known as ECOSOC.

The program for ECOSOC is vast and utopian, designed to promote higher standards of living, full em-

ployment, solutions of international economic, social, health and related problems.

In short, as the UN has failed as a *political* instrument, its propagandists have rushed its development as an *economic* instrument. This is done under the theory of "stomach Communism" — that the way to defeat Communism is to "raise living standards"; that the path to political victory lies through economics.

This theory was demolished in the *MERCURY's* November, 1952, issue by James Burnham:

Communism comes to a nation not spontaneously, but through the activities of a trained, centralized enterprise with headquarters located in the Soviet Union and agents operating everywhere on earth, in the best and worst economic conditions, among the poorest and the most wealthy.

Communism does not mysteriously "arise" in this or that nation, class, or individual. It is *brought* by the agents and influence of this dynamic enterprise.

That the UN is infiltrated with Communists, American and otherwise, has now been revealed. Two American members of the UN Secretariat and concerned with ECOSOC, Alfred Van Tassel and Irving Kaplan, have refused to state whether they are now members of the Communist Party; Mr. Kaplan even refused to state whether he is currently engaged in espionage.

In March, 1950, an American, David Weintraub, the present director of UN Economic Development and Stability, recommended that Owen Lattimore head the UN Technical Assistance Mission to Afghanistan. Mr. Lattimore, described in a unanimous report from a Congressional committee as "a conscious, articulate instrument of the Soviet conspiracy," delivered several thousand scythes to Afghan herdsmen, but it is not recorded whether he urged them to stand fast either for or against Communism.

HERE'S THE POINT Americans must understand: the nature of bureaucracy is the same, whether national or international, and this new "international civil service" at the UN wants desperately to grow. Therefore, it wants to spend more and more money, and particularly it covets the spending of United States Point Four funds — the money we are spending for humanitarian purposes throughout the world.

If the UN can be kept small and primarily political; if the United States will spend only its fair share in all the UN agencies; if all American Communist sympathizers can be forced out of it; if all UN personnel can be identified and the movements of our enemies can be restricted; and if the United States can be represented by wise and vigorous men — then the UN can be made to serve the cause of peace and freedom.

A Policy For Asia

Edward Hunter

IT is pretty generally admitted that our Asia policy — if one can call it that — has failed. We allowed the agents of international Communism to bamboozle and confuse us, while Mao and his men strangled the Chinese republic. We allowed a brazen conspiracy to weave a web of falsehoods and propaganda around the true nature and purposes of the Chinese Reds: their hatred of the United States and their determination to assist Soviet Russia in bringing about its defeat. This is now obvious to almost all. Knowledge of it was a major factor in General Eisenhower's victory at the polls.

The sins and errors of the past have been told over and spelled out in some detail. But post-mortems

Last month Senator Styles Bridges proposed a positive policy for Korea. Here Edward Hunter points out the necessary elements of an all-Asian policy. Mr. Hunter is a noted Far Eastern correspondent; his book, Brainwashing in Red China, was published earlier this year.

are enlightening only up to a point. With the election of a new President, the time has clearly come to turn away from the past and its defeats, and look to the future with all its possibilities. Now, certainly, is the time to forge a positive and effective policy for United States action in Asia.

Asians constantly ask their American friends what the United States is trying to do, what it really wants. "What is your country's policy? Do you have a policy?" are the questions heard oftenest. We say we are against Communism, but this isn't at all how it looks to them. True, we took up the gage in Korea without a moment's hesitation; but Asians feel that there need never have been a war in Korea in the first place if we had been the least bit aware of the true situation. Often it seemed as if we quite frankly favored the Communists. But whether the Reds conquered the Chinese mainland with our help or in spite of ourselves is an academic question to the

people on the spot. What impresses them is that the patient died under our treatment. Our 1949 White Paper sounded to Asians like the writing off of free China. They knew that the only alternative was Communism; they could scarcely believe that we didn't know this too.

When an alarmed American public finally arrested a course of action that in effect gave aid and comfort to the Communist cause, we said we would "let the dust settle" — a nice way of announcing that we would do nothing. Soon after, the United States was forced to adopt a "containment" policy, in answer to the Communist strategy of thrusting out here, then there, and then in the next place. The Communists continued to fight on all fronts. But we foolishly supposed that we could arrest things where they were; we made it our formal policy to surrender the initiative to the Kremlin.

This negative American policy does not work. The Communists warn the non-Communist fringe areas of the Asian continent every day that their turn is next. Everywhere in Asia the Red terror threatens, if not today, then tomorrow. In such a situation Asians who hear the consequences of a feeble United States policy are inclined to give up as futile any resistance to Communist pressure and terror.

This sense of hopelessness, which the Communists of course exploit, can be counteracted only by a simple

and inspiring United States policy that makes sense to and heartens the average man in Asia. Almost any strong policy would be better than none.

ASIANs watched with consternation as the United States abdicated its postwar position of leadership, letting Soviet power expand; today many Asians fear that the U.S.S.R. and not the United States is the stronger.

There is often a desperate note in an Asian's voice when he reminds you that the United States must lead the free world; he doesn't quite believe that we know it. The Soviet Union understands this need to lead; its strategy is simply to rally any and all opposition to the United States. Every issue is decided on the practical basis: does it help or harm the United States?

A positive United States policy for Asia must insist on our exerting the authority without which leadership is hollow. Exercising our authority to achieve mutually agreed upon goals is proper and desirable. Yet the Communists have been able to stalemate us everywhere in Asia, raising the cry of "foreign interference" and "American imperialism" whenever we engaged in a positive action. Usually, then, we beat a hasty retreat, leaving the field to the enemy.

Perhaps the most catastrophic, certainly the most tragic, part of our

Asian policy has been our failure to encourage and support the people on our side. Whether this was intentional or not, again is academic to those who were let down. What Asians saw was that those who expressed friendship for us had to be careful not to burn their bridges behind them, because we insisted that they make believe that the Communists were reasonable people, not engaged in a total war.

Asians who sincerely admired our way of life and said so were held at arm's length. A pro-American Asian was regarded as an embarrassment. The favors went to Asians who were supposed to be objective and sophisticated. To be objective you had to see the numerous imperfections on our side. That this meant proclaiming the many supposed perfections on the Communist side was merely evidence of sophistication. This highly intellectualized approach favored those who straddled the political fence and kept in good standing with pro-Communists. The Reds allowed you to remain in their good graces only by actively helping them against the United States. Our version of liberalism therefore facilitated the infiltration of Communist agents into public and private posts, from aid groups to journalism.

The effect on daily routine of a falsely liberal psychological climate cannot be exaggerated. This gave the lead to the so-called neutrality policy now being followed, to our

disadvantage, by India, Indonesia, and Burma. How can we expect them to change their direction now until we do so ourselves?

Our leadership must be firm, our program expressed in plain language, to remove the ambiguities of the past. In the Korean truce talks we are fed the bitter medicine that we first forced down the throats of the Chinese Nationalists when we insisted that they share and share alike with the Communists. Each time Chiang Kai-shek agreed to a Red demand, the Communists upped it, confident — and with reason — we would insist he resume negotiations. Each time, a bit more of his prestige and power was whittled away.

The only way we can convince the Asian democrats that we are not again leading them astray is to stand by them in their fight against the Communists.

THE UNITED NATIONS, organized by Communist Russia as well as by the United States, was expected naïvely by Americans to be a parliament in which Communist Russia would participate in good faith. But the Soviets intended to utilize the UN only as a sounding board and means of infiltrating the free world. Whether we might not have done better with an outright alliance of like-minded nations is another academic question; we are married to the UN and a divorce would be long, costly, and morale-breaking.

What is vital now is to understand our needs and the Communist intent, and to seize every opportunity that offers. We must concentrate on gaining allies, using the squeeze play against the dictatorships. The UN might then evolve into what any loose world federation has to be if it is to preserve our way of life — a free world forum and bulwark. In this way, the UN would become a platform for us, and a means of penetrating the Communist bloc, thus recovering the initiative the Reds have so far held. The Communists, confronted with such a turning of the tables, would be likely to quit the UN; this might be to the good. If they didn't, that would be all right, too!

The UN is engaged in the Korea fighting by its own decision. This has great significance for the future, but should not be allowed to overshadow the fact that the Koreans and the United States are doing the bulk of the fighting and dying. Our objective should be to bring UN weight more and more into the conflict against Communist aggression in all of Asia. At present, there is at most token aid being given by our allies in Korea, with the French providing the sole manpower in Indo-China, and the British in Singapore and Malaya. Of these, only Korea's defense is recognized as a UN obligation. This point shouldn't be allowed to become a shield behind which others will decide the outcome

without sharing the burden. We must not forget that the only reason the UN was able to approve prompt military action for Korea was because Moscow was then boycotting the sessions of the world organization.

A new policy in Asia must keep uppermost in our minds the shocking truth that the Communists consider themselves at war with the non-Communist world, and regard the United States as the crucial enemy. There is no Korean war, no Malayan war, no Indo-China war in the Red lexicon. There is only an all-Asia war, on an all-Asia front, with Japan, China, Korea, Hong Kong, Indo-China, Malaya, the Philippines, Indonesia, Burma, Thailand, India, Pakistan, and Ceylon each a sector on this front.

THE ONLY EVIDENCE that a shopkeeper or trishaw cyclist in a place like Rangoon sees of United States aid are the swank homes and big cars of the Americans. When the Communists tell them that all this is paid for by native sweat, and that the Americans are only using their country as a military base, bringing devastation and even greater misery, this sounds plausible to them.

This does not mean we have to abandon all long-range aid projects entirely. What we have to do is to reduce them to essentials and put them into a proper political framework. Our policy should emphasize

aid that is visible to the man in the street and in the paddy field, the results of which he can see and begin to enjoy fairly promptly.

A positive United States policy must recognize the self-evident truth that Asia's defense is the primary responsibility of Asia's democrats themselves. New nations that arose out of World War II and owe their existence largely to United States influence and UN backing certainly have the duty to help each other and other Asian lands in maintaining their sovereignty in a free world. India, with its ample population, conspicuously abstains from joining in the common military defense, while insisting on equal rights in deciding policy in the UN.

The Indonesian President, Sukarno, has often been quoted in his own country as declaring that no people deserve freedom who aren't ready to fight for it. This axiom should be incorporated into our Asia policy. Only the extending of this attitude to all the countries of Asia can cope with the large scale of Communist aggression.

The Communists never hesitate to use all the manpower available to them, while shrieking indignantly when any non-Communist country does likewise.

Nothing could please the Kremlin better than a continued attrition of American forces in Asia. We shouldn't afford Stalin this pleasure. Wherever aggression has to be met in Asia,

every Asian nation should be encouraged to help in combating it.

A positive United States policy would be insulting to the Asians if it did not provide for the Asians themselves to take a steadily increasing share in the task of repelling Communism.

THE COMMUNISTS have always followed a double standard in their dealings with others. They proclaim a so-called liberation war for all Asia over the Peiping radio. It is led by Communist Party chiefs. Yet they insist they are not interfering in what they call "peoples' movements." They commit aggression in Korea, and call their troops volunteers. In Indo-China they barely keep their intervention under wraps; in Malaya the guerrilla movement is entirely Chinese.

A new United States policy for Asia should make it known to all Asia in unequivocal language that we sympathize with the efforts of Communist-enslaved populations to liberate themselves from this oppression. Liberation is *our* word.

We have come a long way since we considered propaganda a dirty word, leaving it to the Communists to exploit. They did so, with a vengeance.

The Reds have copied American methods in their evangelism, publicity, and campaigning. The Chinese Communists promised every section of the population just what it

wanted. They promised higher grain prices to farmers — and cheaper bread to city workers; they promised a classless society — led by the working class; they promised equality for all people — and came out with an exceedingly restricted definition of who the “people” were.

Of course, none of these promises could be kept. For the first time in China’s history, it became a virtual colony, ruled by the Kremlin through a proconsul in Peiping.

If the Communists have been able to achieve their propaganda victories by exploiting the Chinese people’s legitimate desires for peace, self-respect, and a fair share of the good things of this world, what greater victories are available to us by basing our propaganda on these simple hopes, for only our way of life has these things to give!

WE DID NOT start the psychological war. We still don’t quite understand that we are in it, much less know how to combat it. Totalitarians are not so naïve as to believe that a weapon must be physically destructive; it may range from caresses to bullets, from a shipload of grain to a stick of concealed dynamite, from a leaflet to brain-washing.

This is a war for the minds of people; everything is subordinated to that end. Americans are able to understand that an auto or a soap salesman can do a better job if he believes in the quality of the auto or

the soap he is selling, but we don’t seem able to realize that this faith is even more necessary when we are trying to rally the Asian people against totalitarian tyranny.

No matter what policy President-elect Eisenhower and Congress agree on, it can only succeed if given honest backing in the field. Planned lack of support — variously known as sabotage and fifth columnism — is among the most effective of the publicly proclaimed, secretly implemented Communist tactics. The dominating factor is morale.

Morale is stronger than the atomic bomb, for morale determines whether this weapon can be used at all when it is needed. We have already seen this truth exemplified. The spurious Stockholm peace petition, nowhere put across on so large a scale or with so great a fanfare as in Asia, created a moral climate that made it impossible for the United States to use the bomb in Korea, whether we wanted to or not — an atmosphere had been generated by this pro-Communist campaign that would have made us sacrifice immeasurably more in Asian and even European support than we would have gained by dropping it.

A new, positive United States policy for Asia would recognize that morale is decisive in psychological warfare. Our new policy must above all be a plan to win the psychological war now being waged. It must be a plan to win.

Americana

DIALECTS— HOW THEY GOT THAT WAY

C. K. Thomas

THE CLICHÉS of linguistic Americana include such items as the buttoned-up Vermonter who allows as how mebbe it'll rain and mebbe it wunt; the sho-nuff Mis'sippi honey chile; and the Brooklynite who drops dese, dem, and doity out of the corner of his mouth. Exaggerated and inaccurate as these clichés often are, they nevertheless indicate our awareness that life is not exactly the same in Vermont, Mississippi, and Brooklyn, and that daily living doesn't sound the same.

Most of us feel that things are ordered normally in our home towns, and that Brooklyn, Natchez, and Bellows Falls (unless we happen to live in one of them) are a bit quaint.

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*G. K. Thomas teaches Speech at Cornell. His article, "Speaking Frankly," which appeared in our September issue, defended the various American "dialects." Now in this contribution Mr. Thomas traces the origins of American dialects.*

However we react to the differences, we recognize that there are a good many regional differences in our habits of life, including our habits of speaking. For some of us, regional habits of speech, except for our own, are deplorable dialects. For others, they are admirable examples of the variety of American life. For students of sociology and linguistics, who are supposed to be scientific and dispassionate, the dialects represent laboratory data to be analyzed.

For a few minutes, then, let's look at the dialects as impartially as we can, and see how they got that way. If we visit the British Isles we find an even wider range; Mississippi, Kentucky, and Vermont sound much more nearly alike than do, say, Devon and Yorkshire. English in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Hawaii, Bermuda, and the Falkland Islands adds to the variety. And yet every English dialect, from York to New York to Cape York, is

a lineal descendant of the Germanic dialects brought into Romanized Celtic Britain by the Angles and Saxons. For fifteen hundred years small boys have learned English from parents, from older brothers and sisters, and from older playmates, in an unbroken continuity of English speech.

No Englishman of Anglo-Saxon times was aware of any greater difference between the speech of his father Aethelred and that of his son Wulfstan than does Joe Doakes Jr. notice between Joe Doakes Sr. and Joe Doakes III. But all the time the language has been changing, until today it is impossible to read the literature of Anglo-Saxon England without studying it as we study Polish or Hindustani. Even Shakespeare puzzles us with an occasional word or phrase. Chaucer sends us to the glossary in the back of the book. Before Chaucer, most of us give up.

Why? We learn to speak by imitating what we hear, but we never imitate exactly. In the course of a few generations, minor changes have piled up and become major, especially if we get out of touch with one another. In a world which has accustomed us to transoceanic airplane flights and virtually instantaneous radio communication, we find it harder every year to realize that this state of affairs was not always so. For the greater part of human history most men had few

opportunities to meet anybody who lived at any distance. A medieval peasant might live and die within an area of a few square miles and know a few hundred people. A medieval "Mississippi" might be only a few miles from a medieval "Vermont," but a visitor from one spot to the other might be even rarer than a Vermont license plate in a present-day Mississippi village. Isolation permits a community to develop by itself, at its own rate of speed, and in its own direction. Thus a language which is spoken in a number of isolated communities is bound, in time, to break up into what we call dialects if the differences are small, or separate languages if the differences are large.

INDEED, the development of separate English dialects is only a part of the much larger development which the linguistic scholars of the nineteenth century managed to analyze. It was known, to begin with, that present-day French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Rumanian had developed from the Latin brought to those outposts of empire by the Roman legionnaires, and that Latin had developed into Italian at home. Not the highly stylized Latin of Cicero and Virgil, to whom a horse was an *equus*, but the Latin of the man in the street, to whom it was a *caballus*, a word which developed into *cavallo* in Italy, *caballo* in Spain, and *cheval* in France.

The obvious relationship of the Romance languages to Latin was one clue. Certain obvious similarities between English, Dutch, German, and the Scandinavian languages provided another. German *Vater*, *Mutter*, *Bruder*, and *Schwester* were so obviously similar to English father, mother, brother, and sister that something more than a chance relationship had to be involved. Sparked by the discovery of Sanscrit, an ancient language of India that showed certain resemblances to both Latin and Greek, the linguistic scholars got down to work and spent a good part of the nineteenth century working out the family tree of the languages of Europe.

The English part of the family tree looks something like this. The Anglo-Saxon invaders of Britain left other speakers of Anglo-Saxon dialects behind them on the Frisian Islands off the Dutch coast. Similarities in speech extending from the Dutch coast to the low country lying south of the Baltic implied an early Low German speech from which the later dialects developed. Further investigation showed the High German dialects of the high country further from the Baltic and North Seas must have developed, like the Low German, from an earlier West Germanic common speech. The family tree thus shows that English and Dutch are first cousins; English and German, second cousins.

Pushing their investigations fur-

ther back, the scholars were able to establish the earlier existence of a common Germanic language, which was the ancestor not only of the West Germanic, but also of the North Germanic or Scandinavian languages, and the extinct East Germanic or Gothic language. And now, with a full head of steam, the linguists pushed on to their climax — the demonstration that most of the languages of Europe and some in India and western Asia were descended from a common ancestral language which they promptly labeled Indo-European.

LET'S SPECULATE about these Indo-Europeans of ten or twelve thousand years ago. We don't know anything about them except for their language, but we can make a few reasonable assumptions. To have a common language they must have lived together, perhaps in some sort of tribal organization. There couldn't have been many of them; primitive life can hardly be metropolitan. How did they break up into separate groups speaking Germanic, Celtic, Slavic, and all the other varieties? Probably the hunting or grazing lands of the tribe became insufficient as the babies kept on coming, and some of the tribesmen had to wander off in search of new land. In the course of time they spread out and lost touch with one another, as one contingent after another wandered off to greener pastures and the de-

velopment of its own dialect in its own way. Eventually, of course, they turned up at the right places on the map as Romans and Greeks and Gauls and Germans in the ancient history books.

From this speculation let's turn to something we can pin down more exactly. Picture the Atlantic world early in the seventeenth century. By now the Indo-Europeans are speaking Spanish and Portuguese, French and Dutch, and English — Early Modern English, to use a term which wouldn't have been understood at the time. Small groups of Europeans were establishing themselves on the western shores of the Atlantic. For the English, as well as some of the others, the language situation has become complicated. Throughout the Middle Ages English was a mass of dialects, but by the seventeenth century there had emerged a kind of court-commercial-big-city dialect in London which acquired a higher prestige than the others, and whose influence spread over a considerable part of England. Some of the settlers in America were undoubtedly affected by this social standard, but even in London it was an upper-class dialect and the settlers were by no means drawn mainly from the upper classes. Many of them, in both New England and Virginia, however, came from southern English counties with dialects akin to that of London. On the other hand, many of the Quakers

who settled Philadelphia came from the north of England, where the London standard had made less headway. And the eighteenth century brought large numbers of Scotch-Irish (Scotch Presbyterians transplanted to Northern Ireland), who settled in the Appalachians and elsewhere along the frontier.

Thus even at the outset the Americans spoke different dialects of English, and if they were not as completely isolated from England as the ancestors of the Germans were from the rest of the Indo-Europeans, nevertheless they were effectively isolated by twentieth-century standards. An occasional ship put in from England, but none arrived in time to save Sir Walter Raleigh's colony on Roanoke Island. As late as 1815 the Battle of New Orleans could be fought before news reached either army that the peace treaty had been signed. Ships could get from Boston to New Amsterdam, Charleston, and the West Indies, but the back country was another matter. Overland travel between the coastal settlements meant breaking one's way through forests and swamps and past lurking redskins.

All this adds up to isolation and the necessity for the English-speaking settlements to get along for a considerable time on their own. Long enough, as it turned out, for the already existing dialects to become a little less similar, and for accidents of geography and colonial

history to affect twentieth-century regional speech patterns.

FOR INSTANCE, the spread of settlers from the Boston area never got beyond the Connecticut River except in northern Massachusetts and eastern Vermont. The settlements on Long Island Sound, on the other hand, spread northward through the river valleys into western Massachusetts and the Lake Champlain Valley into western Vermont. Isolated from Boston, they developed their own speech patterns and laid the foundation for the speech that was to sweep across upper New York state and on to Ohio, Iowa, and Oregon. The "Havvad" type of Boston speech never took root in this area, which retained the sturdy *r* of traditional English.

The peaks of the mountain ranges extending from northeast to southwest across Pennsylvania marked the frontier on the eve of the Revolution; they mark the speech boundary between eastern and western Pennsylvania today. After the Revolution the Scotch-Irish led the way into western Pennsylvania, modifying the dialect as they did so.

From Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the Quakers, Scotch-Irish, and Germans made their way south into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and the southern highlands, pronouncing the *r* of farm and corn while the coastal southerners were beginning

to lose it. Some of the traveling families turned back toward the sea again, and mountain speech came down the valleys and echoed on the Georgia and Carolina plains to contrast with the neighboring plantation speech. Other families turned west through Cumberland Gap into the hill country of Tennessee and Kentucky while the plantation southerners were making their way up the Mississippi. At Paducah, Kentucky, at Cairo, Illinois, and in Missouri the Pennsylvania and southern streams mingled. Across Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, Pennsylvania and New England rubbed elbows, producing a highly complex dialectal pattern for later generations. Westward the streams crossed and recrossed to form even more complex patterns.

Essentially, the transplanting of English to the Western Hemisphere represents, in miniature, the same forces and tendencies that produced the languages and dialects of Europe from the parent Indo-European speech. But where isolation was extreme in prehistoric Europe, and even in Anglo-Saxon England, it has never been as extreme in the era of American colonization and national growth.

Political developments in Western Europe produced a centralization which this hemisphere never knew. The prestige of the upper-class dialect of London enabled it to become an upper-class standard for



most of England, though York and Liverpool tolerated it rather than embraced it. The speech of Paris acquired a similar prestige in France, though Canadian French goes back to Normandy, not to Paris. And the relatively late unification of Spain left American Spanish quite as dependent on other Spanish dialects as on Castilian. Spanish America developed no Madrid of its own, nor did North America, despite London, Ontario, develop a London. No single North American city combined the functions of political and commercial capital and cultural center. The separate regions, the separate cities, developed by themselves with their own standards of what sounded right and normal and what sounded outlandish and funny.

Within the last generation, of course, the radio and the automobile have made us conscious of our differences. The radio industry has made a few half-hearted attempts at uniformity, the "neutral" speech of the radio being basically the type which spread from the Long Island Sound settlements across upstate New York to the Great Lakes country. This type may of course sound neutral in Cleveland and Des Moines, but it doesn't in Philadelphia, Boston, Atlanta, and Houston. Furthermore, the eastern announcers on national hookups have frequently added specifically eastern details, like *ahsk* and *bothuh*, sometimes intentionally and inconsistently, sometimes un-

intentionally because they used their own variety of eastern speech. The resulting "neutral" type is likely to be as neutral as hash, and as uninteresting. If American speech becomes more uniform, that uniformity will probably owe more to the automobile than to the radio. Our migratory habits give today's kids the opportunity to hear more varieties of English than their parents ever heard at an equally impressionable age.

TO THE STUDENT of linguistics a dialect is merely a subdivision of a language. Some dialects represent regional differences; others, class differences. Where class differences mean much, class dialects will also mean much; in this country they have never meant much. Where regional differences and regional pride mean much, regional dialects will also mean much; in this country they have always meant much. The dialects themselves represent the culmination of the linguistic forces that have been brought to bear on each of us: the patterns set by parents, childhood playmates, and neighbors; by parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents back to the Indo-Europeans.

So long as Atlanta, Pittsburgh, and Boston remain conscious of being Atlanta, Pittsburgh, and Boston, the dialects are likely to remain rooted deep in our life. It's too soon to start writing obituaries for them.

Alfred Werner

## *The Painting Plague*

Self-Expression on Sunday

YEARS AGO the German satirist Erich Kaestner, known here chiefly for his amusing children's tale, *Emil and the Detectives*, published a bitter poem about a certain Herr Schmidt — the equivalent of our John Doe — who fell victim to the machine age. Herr Schmidt's life was one daily round of monotonous work, with the exception of a solitary nocturnal respite when "Ein Stündchen blieb für höhere Interessen" — when there was one little hour left for "higher things." But rack his brains as he might, poor Herr Schmidt could not think what to do with this spare hour. So "in dem Stündchen, das ihm übrigblieb, bracht' er sich um" — so in this one brief hour permitted him by the murderous system, he killed himself.

John Doe would never have been

at such a loss: he would have taken up a hobby. If, like the unfortunate Herr Schmidt, he were a member of the urban middle class, the chances are good that he would have gone in for painting — in the past twenty years or so America has become convinced that "everybody can paint."

Of course, there is hardly a country without its "Sunday painters"; but nowhere is painting the hobby of so many men and women as it is in the United States. In Central Europe people collect stamps or play chamber music. In England, only a handful emulate that most famous of all "week-end painters," Winston Churchill, in taking up "painting as a pastime."

France has produced the largest number of "Maîtres Populaires de la Réalité" of any country; but "paint-itis" as an epidemic, affecting large sections of the population, is virtually nonexistent. No matter that one of the great revolutionaries of French art, Henri Rousseau, was a humble tax collector; that Rimbert

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and Vivin were postal clerks; Bombois a wrestler and ditchdigger; Peyronnet a worker in a sugar refinery; Bauchant a gardener; and Séraphine a charwoman. For these gifted people were not hobbyists relaxing after hours, but geniuses whom fate had denied a formal education and who struggled mightily against a thousand odds to reach their goal. They have their equivalents — if not in talent, at least in style and outlook — in such American Primitives as Hicks, Pickett, Kane, and other self-taught masters. Chéronnet's remark about the *Maîtres Populaires* of his country can be applied to our American Primitives: "What is important is that each of these artists saw only one thing: that he was before all else a painter, that is, a man *compelled* to give actual form to his vision of the world."

I HAVE purposely omitted Grandma Moses from my list of American Primitives. This delightful but highly overrated old lady, who admitted with disarming frankness that "if I didn't start painting, I would have raised chickens," belongs to the category of amateurs. She is not one of those unschooled natural artists "compelled" by inward necessity to put paint to canvas, but rather a non-artist "taking up" painting for some sort of "reason." The critics who have praised her work so extravagantly mistake her lack of inhibition, the result of

little education, for the brilliant naïveté of the true Primitive.

Had she lived in New York City, the legendary Mrs. Moses might have started out at the Art Students League, taken courses at the nearest "Y," or gone to a private art school. In all likelihood, she would have been trained in the school of old-fashioned realism rather than in that of abstract art; at any rate, her productions would have been "academic" and no different from the work of other spare-time painters.

It is very much to her credit that she sought neither public favor nor artistic fame. Nevertheless, her name is now known from coast to coast and she is praised by the sophisticated and the unsophisticated alike; her work was sent to Europe as representing American art; and her pictures fetch higher prices than those of most of her colleagues.

This success which Grandma Moses' "healthy" pictures have won is perhaps a symptom of our unhealthy times: in a fit of self-hatred, urbanites wax enthusiastic over an elderly lady of limited talent whose life on her upstate farm has spared her any knowledge of the complications and torments, the problems and experiments, of this century.

The enthusiasm would not have outlasted one exhibition, however, if the old lady had not become a vested interest of dealers, collectors, and self-styled patriots. The investments of such men in the "paintitis"

fad transformed what was an innocent hobby for John and Mrs. Doe into a racket adding its mite of confusion to an already confused world.

There was nothing objectionable about Sunday painting as it started out here in the days of the depression. Because of it, there were perhaps fewer suicides and crimes; people forgot their troubles for an hour or so in art studios lavishly supplied by the W.P.A.; and artists without buyers were able to survive by teaching amateurs. In New York City alone, more than 25,000 young men and women turned up weekly at the free classes held in community centers, settlement houses, and other meeting places.

**B**UT PAINTING for one's own amusement is not the same as painting as an art. Until recently, art was a profession, learned with as much difficulty as the lawyer's or physician's. The Victorians, it is true, regarded a little water-coloring and such as a polite accomplishment with which young spinsters might improve their leisure hours; but it would have been considered absurd on both sides of the Atlantic for a grown-up male to engage in so frivolous a pursuit.

All this changed in the next century. In the thirties, middle-class Americans, employed and unemployed, discovering that their lives were empty, turned with a vengeance to "self-expression." They

did not follow the gleam of creativity in the strict solitude of the taciturn and serious-minded *Maîtres Populaires* of France. Fearing nothing so much as being alone, wanting warmth and companionship in a cold and forbidding world, they came together to learn to paint. In art classes, housewives, mothers, grandmothers, and widows hoped to escape the tedium of metropolitan life and find an outlet for self-expression a little more satisfying than cooking or home decoration. Tired businessmen, physicians, teachers, actors, and writers began new lives at seven-thirty or eight by donning smocks and setting up easels. Before 1930 or so, a housewife or salesman, leaving home with canvas and paint box under arm, would have risked social ostracism; today, if anything, there is something snobbish about it.

Sociologists noted that "the lonely crowd" — the middle-class urbanites of America — had found a new means of "self-improvement." Criminologists introduced painting as a pastime in prisons and reformatories with great success; psychiatrists found that painting was good therapy for the inmates of insane asylums; and in veterans' hospitals painting speeded the recovery of invalids.

Up to about 1940, painting was a pastime somewhat more elevated than collecting bottle caps. There are at least two sociological studies to prove that, prior to about 1933,

"paintitis" had affected relatively few middle-class Americans. In *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture*, published in 1929, the authors of this work remark that "like music, art seems somehow to drop out of the picture between the time boys and girls sketch in their high-school classes and the time they become immersed in the usual activities of Middletown." In 1932-33 three sociologists—George A. Lundberg, Mirra Komarovsky, and Mary Alice McInerny—did research in Westchester County, New York, collecting material for *Leisure: A Suburban Study*. They found that the arts were a leisure-time activity for only one out of ten residents. At the same time, the authors were pleased to report that most suburbanites were solely "interested in the avocational and recreational aspects of their activities"—commercial and professional motives did not count.

THE GREAT CHANGE took place about 1940. In that year drawings and paintings by employees of the National City Bank were exhibited in the windows of a Wall Street firm; a few lines were devoted to this event in the papers. Two years later the International Ladies Garment Workers Union came up with a show of works by cutters, pressers, sample makers, finishers, and cleaners, all of whom had studied at classes conducted by the

union. This show got more publicity, as prizes had been provided for—one-year scholarships to the National Academy and the Art Students League.

The age of innocence was over. Sunday painters gradually invaded such professional magazines as *Art News*, *Art Digest* and the *American Artist*. Dealers flung open their galleries to the amateurs. This in spite of the fact that of some 50,000 professional painters, only forty per cent have gallery outlets for their work; and even this lucky forty per cent don't necessarily make enough from their work to get along. In 1947 Elizabeth McCausland estimated that after twenty years spent in his profession, the average American artist was making about \$1,150 a year.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that for the past twelve years or so artists have been complaining about amateurs stealing the bread out of their mouths. Chichi patrons, glad to forget the "difficult" professional artists, readily sponsor the inferior daubs of movie actresses and grandmothers. The breach made by amateurs in the walls of professional art has led to a general deterioration of standards.

In almost any other country save perhaps England, this eruption of tens of thousands of people into art would have caused a serious moral disturbance. Yet Puritan America was not affected. Children weren't

neglected because mothers flocked *en masse* to studios. Nor did husbands, emulating Gauguin, abandon their families in order to Sunday-paint all week.

WHAT HAPPENED was more in keeping with the spirit of the land. As early as 1892 the editor of the British *Spectator* declared: "All Americans agree . . . that their country is pervaded by a distaste for leisure." The new hobbyists now made the inevitable discovery that they had been indulging in a useless yet costly enterprise — one that paid no dividends. A hobby should be useful! Wherever they went, Benjamin Franklin stood before them with uplifted finger: "He that idly loses five shillings' worth of time, loses five shillings, and might as prudently throw five shillings into the sea." Few of our Sunday painters would have understood Franklin's contemporary, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who stuffily defined art as "a disinterested enjoyment of the beautiful." In very few cases had the arts been taken up as a hobby after a lifelong admiration for the great masters. The utilitarian spirit got the better of our week-end painters, with the result that a pleasant avocation turned shrewd and self-seeking.

People who would laugh at the idea of peddling radios patched together by themselves at home send half-baked pictures to gallery own-

ers and expect them to be sold. A friend's being coaxed into buying a canvas is worth more than a judicious critic's praise. And if they can't find anybody to buy their Sunday efforts, they can still use painting as a means of self-aggrandizement. Only a few art dealers refuse amateurs wishing to buy wall space in their galleries for a couple of weeks, nor are critics overly frank about calling an amateur's daub a daub. Both dealers and critics say that it is useless to try and fight the amateur.

You don't find shennanigans of this sort taking place in France, where painting is considered a serious occupation requiring years of study, and where even the "Moderns" spend countless hours copying Old Masters in the Louvre before launching out on canvases of their own. One of these Moderns, Matisse, warned that "you must be able to walk with assurance on the ground before you try to negotiate a tight-rope." Matisse discontinued an art school he was running when he decided that his students weren't serious enough.

In this country of pioneers the "self-made man" has long been more highly regarded than the scholar, though this attitude seems to be changing somewhat. But, unfortunately, the "self-made artist" is encouraged to aspire beyond his sphere by writers and art teachers everywhere. Churchill decades ago wrote an es-

say, "Painting as a Pastime," in which he warned his fellow-amateurs that they should not expect to become masters, but must content themselves "with a joy-ride in a paint-box." And then, eating his own words, he went on to exhibit his pictures in the Royal Academy! Though not a professional artist, he is far less untutored than the public perhaps supposes, having had the guidance of many well-known artists, including his friend, Sir William Orpen. Nevertheless, Churchill urged laymen to throw caution to the winds and plunge into art without preparation: "There really is not time for the deliberate approach." He described his first trial as follows:

Splash into the turpentine, wallow into the blue and the white, frantic flourish on the palette — clean no longer — and then several large fiery strokes and slashes of blue on the absolutely cowering canvas. Anyone could see that it could not hit back. No evil fate avenged the jaunty violence. The canvas grinned in helplessness before me. The spell was broken. The sickly inhibitions rolled away. I seized the large brush and fell upon my victim with berserk fury. I have never felt any awe of a canvas since.

**I**N THE UNITED STATES so much has been done to encourage amateurism that you are surprised to find artists still sweating away at their craft in school and studio. One writer linked amateur painting with

the grass-roots traditions in American art; it is "a product of our new democracy, a Declaration of Independence for the Arts." She traced this recent rise of Sunday painting to "the assumption that anyone who wanted to could paint independently without formal instruction and without overseas inspiration or guidance," and referred to the American folk artists of the Colonial and Early Revolutionary era. What she failed to say was that these humble artisans who painted portraits of farmers and their families in remote homesteads never considered themselves in the same category with trained artists like Copley, Stuart, or the Peales. Few of these "limners" would have dreamt that some day their daubs would be installed in museums and fetch high prices at public auctions.

The notion that you merely have to learn a few "tricks" ("skills") in order to paint has been spread by hundreds of cynical teachers anxious to exploit the market. Even some of the great old men who themselves had an excellent formal training forty or fifty years ago, now proclaim offhandedly that no lengthy course of instruction is needed by an artist; that, in fact, knowledge would corrupt the kind of "pure" painting now being produced by the non-objective school. "Just express yourself, follow your instincts!" Are they serious? Or is this the progressive education of art schools? The late Alfred Stieglitz once coined the



aristocratic statement: "Art is by the few and for the few"; he was a foe of amateurism to his very end. While it is difficult to draw a sharp line between the realm of the artist and that of the amateur — still, a line must be drawn somewhere.

At first, the trade papers sided with the worried professionals. When a veteran like the German surrealist Max Ernst publicly declared (tongue in cheek?) that the exhibition, "They Taught Themselves," was the finest show he had seen since coming to America, *Art Digest* sharply rebuked him — what right did he have to mislead the general public? Eventually, however, two magazines decided that it was good business to install a cozy corner for the various businessmen's, doctors', and other amateur clubs, lest their doings get mixed up with the activities of bona fide artists. In one magazine, amateur exhibitions are reviewed exclusively on an amateurs' page. Yet there are inevitable complications. Grandma Moses is now being featured among the professionals. The New York show of the wife of the Iranian ambassador to the Court of St. James was reviewed on the amateurs' page; the critic praised her for stealing time from hostessing. But in the next issue the lady indignantly retorted that she was a professional painter and expected to be treated as such.

The worst offenders are, of course, some of the popular mass-circulation

magazines. Until recently, art was scarcely one of their more pressing concerns. In the last few years, however, it has invaded their pages in the form of lush color photographs. But here again the daubs made by famous military men, actors, corporation lawyers, dress designers, boxers, and hostesses outweigh serious art to a large extent. It is true that some of them show an astonishing skill; but none of them betray a trace of exceptional talent, freshness of approach, or boldness of idea. Nobody would look at them twice if they didn't bear a well-known name. A few of them are slick portraits; the majority are landscapes, a subject preferred by amateurs because it is believed to be "easier."

ART IS NOW something that "everybody can do." Everybody has a sister or an uncle who paints. For a couple of dollars you can even buy a sketched-in picture ready for "coloring"; numbers on the sketch refer you to numbered paint pots. This kit guarantees a "genuine" hand-painted picture. It is hard to see why everybody isn't happy. The owners of art shops certainly are — they have never experienced such a boom.

Yet we are farther away from producing masters than we were twenty years ago. Twenty years is a long time. Why hasn't a single man or woman of talent emerged from the tens of thousands who put up easels? A host of copyists are produced,

slavishly imitating their teachers, and framing their own pictures as though they were masterpieces.

Some critics had hoped that "paintitis" would make better observers and better critics out of people who together represent the general taste. They remembered, optimistically, what Walt Whitman had said: "To have great poets there must be great audiences too," a sentence that applies to all the arts. But these optimists overlooked the plain fact that the new paint addicts were not genuine enthusiasts, but for the most part self-indulgent philistines interested only in getting "quick results" from paint and canvas. They do not become patrons, for they produce and have eyes for their own pictures only. If they do attend shows, it is primarily to make themselves seen and heard.

Churchill advocated painting as a hobby; it was a way to "restore the psychic equilibrium" of tired twentieth-century men. It was fun when it started, but how many neurotics now belabor the canvas with gritted teeth, their thoughts centered only on success? If they are denied recognition as professionals, they cheekily call themselves "Primitives," though this term is rightly applied only to those who, like that *coeur simple*, Henri Rousseau, never had the benefit of an education. Actually, of course, they are neither Primitives nor Sunday painters; as Manet said, "There are no amateurs, but only

those who paint bad pictures." There is nothing reprehensible in John Doe's painting a bad picture and getting fun out of it. A dangerous confusion arises when unscrupulous men who know better seek to palm it off as high art on an unsuspecting public. All standards are debased and basic distinctions blurred when daubs are considered even in the same category with the work of professionals who have given their lives and hearts to a cause they put beyond self.

MEANWHILE, the number of "culture vultures" grows apace. The deplorable result is the death of the genuine amateur (literally, "the lover") and dilettante (literally, one who "takes delight"). What remains is the narcissist who turns the "thing-in-itself" into a "thing-for-himself," who heaps confusion upon confusion from Carmel to Provincetown. This is the emotionally immature pseudo-artist, whose sole God is a fetish called "self-expression," this eternal adolescent, unable either to escape from reality to a world of make-believe, or to strike deep into the substance of everyday life. He is a freak, devoid of any responsibility toward the society upon which he thrusts his tiny creative effusions.

About a century ago Horace Mann said: "We shall perish by the very instruments prepared for our happiness."

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## IN OUR READERS' OPINION

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### THE REAL PROBLEM

» I should like to see your October number of the *MERCURY* in every American home. . . . To me it is of vital significance, especially the editorial, "In the Mercury's Opinion." I congratulate you on your insight into the real problem our nation is facing.

MRS. MARY MAURINE P. ROOT  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

### WHAT PRICE PRESIDENTS?

» The article that appeared in your October issue by Serge Fliegers entitled "What Price Presidents?" was quite interesting and I would like to offer my congratulations to the author on the painstaking thoroughness with which he has approached the important subject of campaign financing.

Particularly of interest was Mr. Fliegers' discussion of the role played by the Citizens for Eisenhower-Nixon Committee and his statement that "this intrusion of amateurs into politics is one of the healthiest developments we have seen during the past few years."

However, I disagree with the writer where he states: "But as regards electoral financing, these groups only serve to complicate the picture and increase the cost of elections. Efforts are duplicated and overhead costs for headquarters, staff, mailing, and publicity

are often tripled." As an independent who has served as second in command of the "State Citizens for Eisenhower" since March 1 of this year, I can sincerely state that up until the convention period we financed and sustained ourselves in our headquarters at the Roosevelt Hotel through the efforts of a splendid group of volunteer workers on our Finance Committee, by getting small contributions through an "Operation Envelope" procedure which brought us from \$1.00 to \$25.00 per contributor, which was an appeal to the masses, as well as to big business. Furthermore, from the figures we have received from the National Finance Committee, certainly very few large contributions were received. Aside from this, you must understand that at our staff headquarters we had as many as 300 volunteers working daily from March 1 to convention time and since then in our new quarters at the Astor Hotel. I believe that our day and night staff comprised many more than this figure, aside from the "Youth for Eisenhower" which was also under our auspices, with a volunteer group of approximately 2,000 young men and women. This also goes for the entire State of New York where we operated approximately 400 Eisenhower Clubs, comprising a figure of close to 30,000 volunteer workers. . . .

Finally, I would like to endorse heartily the suggestion contained in

the article to establish a permanent Congressional Committee charged with supervising and enforcing legislation governing election practices in this country.

LEONARD GINSBERG,  
DIRECTOR, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
NEW YORK STATE CITIZENS FOR  
EISENHOWER-NIXON,  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

### A VITAL MATTER

» Serge Fliegers' article, "What Price Presidents?" was splendid. I read it with keen interest. You have contributed a great deal toward public education on a vital matter.

MAX M. KAMPELMAN,  
LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL,  
UNITED STATES SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON  
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

### BASIC PROBLEM

» I have just seen the October issue of your magazine and enjoyed it very much. I was struck by Serge Fliegers' essay on "What Price Presidents?" which I think strikes at a very basic problem of our political system.

Such an investigation — to my knowledge — has not been published by any other magazine or newspaper, and I feel the people should know about it. Especially, I agree with Mr. Fliegers' suggestion that a permanent Commission should be created in Congress to supervise and regulate elections.

Having been active in the Republican Party in both Wyoming and Texas I do not believe the idea of party dues is practicable. In the South the poll tax

prevents hundreds of thousands of people from voting. It is excellent psychology to get campaign contributions from as many people as possible. But it is the big donations which finance campaigns.

Mr. Fliegers' article shows a tremendous amount of research and good thinking. Let's have more like it.

MONTE WARNER  
DALLAS, TEXAS

### FIFTH COLUMNIST DULLES?

» I have been a great admirer and constant reader of *THE AMERICAN MERCURY* for its entire twenty-nine years of publication. Many of your articles have been as beacon lights in a night of darkness.

Try to imagine, then, my feelings when reading "In the Mercury's Opinion" in your October issue, Page 7, Column 1, Paragraph 2, Sentence 2: "It was John Foster Dulles who fashioned the Japanese Peace Treaty, the only constructive development in the Pacific." This sentence is pulverizing, not because of what it says but because of what it leaves unsaid. The combined thinking of your editorial staff, plus the research facilities available to you, must certainly have made it clear that John Foster Dulles is the New Deal's "Fifth Column" within the Republican ranks.

M. E. ANDERSON  
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

### NO RESPECT

» I received *THE AMERICAN MERCURY*, which I am returning to your office as I know as much about Dean Acheson as you or your *AMERICAN MERCURY*.

We've got the best government in the world and the most prosperous.

I have never had much respect for those who slander and criticize their government and government officials.

The government has an honest, honorable, educated staff for this purpose to keep track of the rascals, thieves, liars and traitors. As we all know, you couldn't even get as many as twelve when our Lord was selecting, without having a traitor in it.

J. M. ANDERSON

SAVANNAH BEACH, GEORGIA

### NEW JERSEY VISITED

» As an old reader of the *Mencken MERCURY*, I want to tell you that the October number of your *AMERICAN MERCURY* is as good. Kavanagh's "Report on New Jersey" is better than Mencken.

America needs satire and more of it. Complacency is our worst enemy. When England needed satire Swift came out of Ireland with it. Let Kavanagh do the same for America. Print more of it.

L. E. A. BYRNS

WASHINGTON, D. C.

### BOG TROTTER BORN?

» I am not usually given to the use of crude language, but having just read Peter Kavanagh's article "The Bog Across the River" in the October issue of the *MERCURY*, I find it necessary to tell you that in my opinion he is —, very ignorant of New Jersey and undoubtedly a bog trotter born. Why not see all of a state before he starts to criticize it and sometime, when he has time, write an article on a

state which doesn't have New Jersey's bad features. I'll bet he can't.

HENRY STRICKER

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

### BOGGY EXPOSITION

» Peter Kavanagh's satirical onslaught may cause many a New Jerseyite, tending to condone the all-too-familiar eyeshores on his fair state's otherwise beautiful terrain, to lift an eyebrow, burst a blood vessel or even go into a state of aesthetic shock and/or landscape trauma.

With discerning eye and deft pen he has unsheathed community cankers in his "boggy" exposition featured in your excellent October issue.

Should you be on the outlook for an as yet unrecognized Hemingway equivalent in realism of detail, here's your man. Let's hear more from him!

M. M. ANNEN

WASHINGTON, D. C.

### BOG VS. SALT MEADOW

» THE *AMERICAN MERCURY*'s article on New Jersey ["The Bog Across the River," by Peter Kavanagh, October, 1952] is an uncalled for slander.

You do not even know the difference between a bog and a salt meadow.

GRANVILLE THOMAS

MILLVILLE, NEW JERSEY

### HOW TRUE

» I got an awful laugh out of your piece on New Jersey ["The Bog Across the River," October, 1952]. You have to have lived there and worked for the state to know how true it is.

MABEL NASHE

TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

**THE "LEGEND'S" BURDEN**

» In "The Sparkman Legend" [October, 1952] I am wondering where art ends and uncouthness begins. When will the intelligentsia cease to use the South as a platform upon which to appeal to prejudice. The "Legend's" burden is not to show what candidate is best fitted for the job, but to give a Roman Holiday to the South-hating members of the human race who live up Nawth.

CLAYTON STEPHENS, D.V.M.  
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

**MEALYMOUTHED**

» "The Sparkman Legend" [October, 1952] was flavorsome and unadulterated. It wet quite a few whistles in these parts, and with lip-smacking appreciation.

*Oleaginous* is a good word for him [Sparkman]. But don't forget that good old expression used by your grandmother and mine — *mealymouthed*.

CHRISTINE ADCOCK WIMBERLY  
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

**WEST VIRGINIAN RADICALS**

» In the very significant article "Kilgore: West Virginian Water Boy," in your October number, William Bradford Huie writes: "West Virginia was born of a mountaineers' rebellion against tideland aristocracy; it is one of the states . . . which has nourished native radicalism."

One is tempted to recall that of the forty-eight States of the Union, forty-seven, inspired by the solemn acknowledgment in our Declaration of Independence, invoked, or in some other

phrase, expressed gratitude to God or dependence on a Supreme Being.

West Virginia is not one of the forty-seven.

A. M. DICKSON

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

**DOWN TO EARTH**

» May I say, that although I bought THE AMERICAN MERCURY solely to read the article on Senator Kilgore ["West Virginian Water Boy," October, 1952], I have been unable to stop reading. The articles are so well written. Not the cut and dried stuffy things usually printed, but down-to-earth reading that is clear. . . .

MRS. MERIAN E. MOYER

ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

**SAUCERS AND SULLIVAN**

» I write this letter in regard to the article in your October issue by Victor Black, "The Flying Saucer Hoax."

First, I should like to point out to Mr. Black that the zodiacal light and the northern lights are not the same thing. The zodiacal light is caused by sunlight reflected from meteoric material concentrated within the earth's orbit and near the ecliptic plain. The aurora borealis, northern lights, is ascribed to charged particles coming at high speed from the sun and most abundantly from solar flares. These particles are diverted toward the poles by the earth's magnetic field where they collide with atoms of the upper atmosphere. The ionized atoms recombining with other electrons emit light.

Second, I feel that Mr. Black's entire treatment of "flying saucers" is un-

reasonable, as are his slurs on the field of science fiction. In following reports of the flying saucers I have never before come across mention of Mr. Ed J. Sullivan. I believe that the saucers were *not*, as intimated by Mr. Black, first seen by any Mr. Sullivan. I believe that the first saucer report was by Kenneth Arnold, a trained aircraft observer and pilot.

In one paragraph Mr. Black tells of a "science-fiction craze" that has swept America; he blames this craze on guided missile development, and says that flying saucers belong in *Amazing Stories*. This paragraph shows that Mr. Black knows little about flying saucers and nothing about science fiction. *Amazing Stories* is not one of the leading science-fiction magazines and typifying the science-fiction field by mentioning this magazine is like typifying authors such as Will James and Mark Twain by referring to such magazines as *Wild West* or *Western Romance*. Also, science fiction is not a new "craze," it is much older than Mr. Black unless he was a contemporary of Jules Verne.

PETER HARDEEN  
MADISON, WISCONSIN

## MR. BLACK REPLIES

» I would like to leave the astronomical debate concerning zodiacal light and the northern lights to Mr. Hardeen and the aerophysicists at the California Institute of Technology.

As far as science-fiction literature goes — I confess I seldom read the stuff. But many of the science-fiction magazines do agree with me in that saucers are proper material for their fantasies.

Just the other day I picked one of these magazines off the newsstand and opened it up. There one was — a flying saucer! Big as life!

Mr. Hardeen's assertion that I have not bothered to differentiate fact and fiction in what I write is a little puzzling. The Air Force is still trying to differentiate and spending a good deal of money in the process. When they finally classify flying saucers, I'm sure we'll all hear the earth-shaking announcement. Furthermore, I did not say that flying saucers per se were a hoax. I spent several paragraphs explaining what the Air Force and leading aerophysicists thought they were.

VICTOR BLACK  
TEMPLE CITY, CALIFORNIA

## TRADITION CONTINUED

» Your magazine continues to surprise me. I date back to the older days of the *MERCURY* under Mencken and his less flamboyant successors. When Mr. Huie took over I feared that he had killed the poor old magazine. At least I let my subscription lapse. This summer I have been buying some single copies. I am pleased to note your continued improvement. This September issue which I have is both readable and important from its first article to its last. The need for a more reasonable, intelligent and conservative magazine of letters in this country is profound, and I am hopeful that you may find a considerably wider audience as your virtues become known.

Currently your Dr. Viereck says what many Americans must be think-



ing, but without representation in our main magazines. The same comment applies to the article by Mr. Hunter ["Report on Asia: Defeat by Default," September, 1952]. In book reviews, the *MERCURY* has always been superior, and I am pleased that you are continuing the tradition.

HAROLD W. DORN  
SOUTH MIAMI, FLORIDA

### CIVILIZED CONSERVATISM

» In appreciation of Professor Vierck's two articles ["In Defense of British Imperialism," September 1952; "Vision and Values," October 1952] and your contribution to the—lost—cause of thoughtful, civilized and civilizing conservatism.

HANNELORE KOENIGSBERGER  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

### A SPADE IS A SPADE

» The October issue of *THE AMERICAN MERCURY* finally did it: I'm positively finished with your magazine. To me, the men behind the *A.M.* are creatures of impulse, of prejudice, of rationalizations—passing judgments that do not comport with facts nor with present-day realities.

I disagree with you when you note that the October issue is "our pre-election issue." Let's call a spade a spade, shall we? Your October issue was your "Republican" issue: a weeping and wailing song-and-dance of emotional stupidity. We've been hearing those fake "charges" for nigh unto twenty-one years and yet America still remains America—the land of the free minus the *laissez-faire* ambitions of money-mad corporations who

constantly preach the doctrine of "free enterprise" and who are intent to control the market through monopolies and cartels.

OTTO V. FOX  
ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

### THE MACS

» I fear your drive for subscriptions will not be increased by the banal article: "The Macs and the Ikes" [T. Harry Williams, October, 1952].

Surely the nationally beloved General MacArthur was the first man in America to turn the tide from the apathetic acceptance of the "low" deal in Washington to a high standard of thinking. His courage and vision inspired our people with a new hope for the future welfare of our country.

NAOMI L. BURWELL  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

### BROWBEATING MR. TRUMAN?

» I must say that I would never have thought that one of my favorite periodicals would print something like "The Macs and the Ikes" [October, 1952].

Professor T. Harry Williams says, in his article: "The Mac generals have been men . . . always certain that they were far superior in mental power to the President above them . . . and always ready to instruct him in matters of policy or to try to browbeat him into adopting their ideas."

Is it to be supposed that the use of the term "scholarly piece" in describing Prof. Williams' article removes the obligation to back up such statements as the above with concrete examples? When did MacArthur at-

tempt to "browbeat" Mr. Truman into adopting his ideas? By his address to the V.F.W.? But his position on Formosa therein set forth has since been ostensibly embraced by the Administration. By his letter to Representative Martin? But it should be admitted by all that Congress must have access to the opinions of military geniuses like MacArthur without State Department censorship of those opinions. By asking the Communist generals to meet him in the field to negotiate peace? But note that the same proposal when voiced by the Soviet representative at the U.N., was quickly accepted by the men who fired MacArthur.

RALPH J. RAICO  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

### GROUPING THE GENERALS

» Since Mr. Williams ["The Macs and the Ikes," October, 1952] is classifying generals into groups, it would be interesting to know in which group General Collins, Stillwell, Marshall, and Vaughn are classified?

ANNE STACEY  
MALVERNE, NEW YORK

### WRINGING WITHERS

"The Macs and the Ikes" [T. Harry Williams, October, 1952] was a magnificent article. Like the true historian Mr. William uses the past to throw light on the present.

This article effectually debunks the "MacArthur Legend"; some of the nastiest elements in this country have rallied to that legend. I trust their withers are wrung.

JOHN H. KEYES  
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

### TWICE AS LONG?

» The only thing wrong with THE AMERICAN MERCURY is that it should be twice as long.

JANE MULQUEEN  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

### TROUBLED SOULS

» Your book-reviewing Mr. Getlein ["Newman's Odyssey," October, 1952] is a man more given to hyperbole than to discernment. He shows that when, in his review of Sean O'Faolain's *Newman's Way*, he writes: "In a day when the steps of the Catholic church are thronged with converts tossed there by private emotional conflicts, —"

The hyperbole there is obvious. The lack of discernment is, perhaps, not so obviously but just as surely there. Mr. Getlein fails to discern that emotional conflicts can be the manifestation of a troubled soul. To minister to troubled souls is the province of the church. Consequently a conversion resulting from emotional conflicts is not the cheapened thing Mr. Getlein's words imply. He professes to look upon Newman's conversion as a powerful intellectual search for truth. It was all of that, but that Newman was devoid of emotional conflict is belied by his hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light."

A. B. MARTINI  
PORTLAND, OREGON

### THE RAPID REVOLUTION

» It is somewhat difficult to write for a monthly magazine about a revolution which is still in progress. I would like to bring my article on Egypt ["The Middle-Class Revolution," November,

1952] up to date on one small point. I mentioned Colonel Rashid Mehannah, one of the three members of the regency council, as being next in succession to Nagib. Following a dispute, however, Colonel Mehannah has been compelled suddenly to resign and therefore is no longer in the line of succession.

MARK ALEXANDER  
JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

### MR. SCHLESINGER VS. MR. BURNHAM

» The issue of *THE AMERICAN MERCURY* containing James Burnham's article, "The Case Against Adlai Stevenson" [October, 1952], has just come to my attention.

The whole article is filled with distortions and misrepresentations; but I am concerned here only with those which refer to me.

His suggestion that I am or ever have been pro-Soviet or pro-Communist is a lie — and I am sure that Mr. Burnham knows it. I am astonished that he should have forgotten the favorable review I wrote some years ago of his anti-Communist book *The Struggle Against the World*. This was written at a time when it was still unpopular to take an anti-Communist position; and Mr. Burnham was grateful enough to me then for it.

His suggestion that I have ever been in any way associated with the Institute of Pacific Relations is a lie.

His suggestion that I was ever a defender of Alger Hiss is a lie. Whittaker Chambers himself first told me the Hiss story in the summer of 1946; and I have never had doubts about Hiss' probable guilt since.

His suggestion that William Remington was or is my "friend" is a lie. I have never seen him, talked to him or had any communication with him in my life.

I am not even, as Mr. Burnham falsely states, married to the sister of John K. Fairbank. My wife has three sisters, and I assume no responsibility for the politics of any of their husbands. But I certainly do not believe that Fairbank is a Communist.

ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER, JR.  
EXECUTIVE MANSION  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

### MR. BURNHAM REPLIES

» I really can't figure what Professor Schlesinger is shouting about. My article in no way whatsoever connected him with Alger Hiss. He must have confused himself with his candidate. I did not state or imply that he was pro-Soviet, pro-Communist, or associated with the Institute of Pacific Relations. As for what my words may have "suggested" to Professor Schlesinger, he will have to settle that with his own psyche.

I am sorry about having lied in calling Mrs. Schlesinger a sister (instead of sister-in-law) of John K. Fairbank. On this point I made a full confession which was carried in your November issue as an editorial correction.

As for Fairbank and Remington, they have been variously called, with some specification of detail, Communist, pro-Communist, fellow-traveling and front-joining. It is my understanding that Professor Schlesinger has expressed his disbelief in the charges

against these men and his confidence in their political integrity, as he has — in no uncertain terms — denounced those, like Senator McCarran, who have inquired into the charges. He is certainly within his rights to do so, and I presume that I am within mine when I therefore question his political judgment. If my understanding on this matter is wrong, I should rejoice to correct what I have written. Nothing in this present letter from Professor Schlesinger indicates that I am wrong.

And while we are on the topic of guilt by association, I gather from news reports (which also, of course, may be lies) that during the campaign Schlesinger served on a "team" (as the phrase goes) which included among its active members Archibald MacLeish, Robert E. Sherwood and Claude Pepper. Would he regard it as "sheer McCarthyism" if an anti-Communist eyebrow were raised at that troika?

JAMES BURNHAM  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

### A TRANSITORY STAGE?

» I think that with Peter Schmid you have added another observant contributor to your growing list of sane and important writers. His "Letter from

Peru" [October, 1952], as well as his contribution on Colombia ["Letter from Colombia," September, 1952], supply a maximum of information with a minimum of the feeling that one is "being informed." Particularly, his notion that Peru is now achieving an evolution at the hands of a military "dictator" who somehow resembles Nagib in Egypt in his fight against corruption, for a balanced budget, for better economic conditions, seems to me of real importance. It points to a development which perhaps marks the transitory stage in the effort of Latin America as well as Near Eastern countries to shed their troubled past for a democratic way of life. Turkey's evolution is perhaps the first example of this trend.

GEORGE P. SHELDON,  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

### NO BEDMATE HE

» McCarthy, you say ["In the Mercury's Opinion," October, 1952], "may be a rather rambunctious bedmate." "But," you ask, "is he less desirable than Marcantonio?"

Would it be all right with you if I just slept on the floor?

DR. ROBERT W. ROGERS  
PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY

# **Do You Know —**

*— that, according to the AFL's Free Trade Union Committee, the Chinese Communist regime has executed or caused the death of more than 14 million people in the last five years, including more than 500 United States prisoners of war captured in Korea?*

R. LA PLACA  
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

*— that today, seven years after World War II, more than a million German, Italian, Japanese, and other prisoners of war, as well as thousands of civilians deported to the Soviet Union, are still missing?*

LEE J. MACINTOSH  
JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY

*— that although the Constitution of Guatemala specifically prohibits the existence of any political party with foreign or international connections, the Communist Party there publishes an official daily newspaper, and is running a slate of official candidates for Congress in the current elections?*

JUAN GOMEZ BLANCO  
MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

*— that with scarcely a voice of protest from Capitol Hill, the Department of State has rigidly maintained official silence on the distribution of \$18 billion thus far allocated for military and economic aid to our Allies? But that throughout the Lend-Lease program of World War II details regarding the Lend-Lease distributions were made public in quarterly reports?*

R. F. WELLS  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

*— that the McCarran Act, which goes into effect at the end of this December, contains no provision barring the immigration into the United States of people with records of membership in the Nazi, Fascist, and Falangist parties?*

FRANKLIN H. HARTS  
NEW YORK, N. Y.

*— that more than four thousand British servicemen have been killed in the war against Communist forces in Malaya?*

EUGENE F. BARKER  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

In this space each month the MERCURY will publish what we judge to be the most important facts submitted by our readers. These must be facts, not opinions. Elsewhere we publish readers' opinions as well as our own. We invite the submission of such facts and will pay \$5 for each one published. Each submission should carry the notice "Facts" and should be accompanied by an authoritative reference. Unfortunately, we are not able to acknowledge or return submitted material.

Bernard Wolfe

# The Man With the Rubber Nose

OR

## ONE SOLUBLE SPOON AFTER ANOTHER

ONCE, watching the news flashes chase their shining tails around the Times Building, Al Kiefer, Broadway ghostwriter, was moved to a lyrical outburst:

"See? There you are. Sign of the times. Prosody by Mazda. Who's our new patron saint of letters? Consolidated Edison. Need a new kind of illuminated text, boy. The novels of the future'll be written on that sign with a soldering iron, with spliced cables, mark my words. First there was the goose quill, then the Corona portable — now the telegrapher's key. And the punched tape. American lit's gonna have a real punch on tape. The next Herman Melville, he'll make with the staccato ampers. Henry James'll give out in lilting ohms. Letters losing their fetters. Coming of age, friend, getting downright electrifying. More

~~~~~  
Bernard Wolfe, whose novel Limbo has just been published by Random House, is a frequent MERCURY contributor.

bulbose than verbose. American lit's well lit." (Kiefer was himself remarkably well lit at the time: not an excuse but an explanation.)

These prophetic remarks were made in the doorway of a Broadway shop called FUN, INC. (JOKES, TRICKS, GAGS, NOVELTIES, SOUVENIRS). They were addressed to the proprietor of the shop, Danny Atlas, the Salonikan who introduced the soluble spoon into American culture; Danny smiled appreciatively. More: laughed out loud, almost in homage. Not to Kiefer's careening rhetoric, which Danny doesn't follow, but to the *Times* sign, of which Danny is well-wisher, advocate, tout, aficionado. And student: he knows all about the sign, its inner workings. The punched tape which controls the stampede of bulletins. The man who takes the news off the ticker and prepares the tape. Anatole, the pimply-faced kid who helps with the tape. Danny Atlas knows all about Anatole. Anatole

drops into Danny's place regularly to order baby turtles for his girl — turtles with hand-drawn inscriptions like: *Gertrude, You're Gone, You're the Most, You Make Me Flip. I Dig Your Blend.* (Signed) "*Real Cool.*" Under Anatole's tutelage, Danny has become the town's foremost lay authority on the *Times* sign. . . .

9:17, according to the clock on the Bond Clothing sign. Danny stands in front of his store, potbellied Pindarus, Prometheus in a slimjim, his centaurial moon face crumpled with smiles as he studies the ribboned auguries flashing to the south. These ambulatory headlines have something for everybody, certainly: catastrophe, caper, cliché, chitchat, claptrap. For Danny, though, they are an avalanche of the improbable — well, a cavalcade of soluble spoons, you might say. Especially tonight. Tonight the sign is going to outdo itself, it will make the leap from drab reportage to cataclysmic creativity. Going to be plenty bulbose tonight. Bulbose as anything. Bulbose and then some, boy. Tonight, at precisely 9:37, if all goes well, the sign of the times is going to write a novel. With, of course, an assist from Anatole.

9:17. Danny Atlas begins to quake with laughter, his yoghurt jowls go into a hula. A new headline is beginning to cakewalk across the sign: M-U-K EXECUTIVES IN EMERGENCY SESSION TO PICK

LEAD FOR OLD TESTAMENT EPIC. Beside himself, Danny Atlas takes hold of his nose, twists it until it touches his right cheek, swings it in a 180-degree arc until it touches his left cheek.

IN A SUITE on the thirty-ninth floor of the Waldorf the executives of M-U-K (Metro-Uni-Key Productions) are huddled around a humidior filled with shillelagh-sized Larrañagas. They are engaged in a highly technical activity, known in the jargon of their trade as "kicking it around."

"Who would of believed it anyway? A French accent on top of Mount Sinai?"

"I still say Boyer would have been a natural. He could play the hell out of the part."

"From the beginning I was against it. You ask me, a French accent sounds a little dirty. For a bedroom scene, a smootch, fine. But you locate it on Mount Sinai and right away people —"

"Can I get in an observation here? Boyer we haven't got — he can't go up Mount Sinai, he's booked for the whole season solid to tour with *Don Juan in Hell*. So do we talk about maybes and what-ifs or do we get down to cases?"

"A point well taken. Remember, to stick to schedule we got to start shooting Friday. We sit here until we got the exact right man for the part."

"Right. How about Clifton Webb?"

"Mr. Belvedere on Mount Sinai? It hasn't got the right feel. You're reaching."

"Orson Welles?"

"Mm-mm. Harry Lime on Mount Sinai. William Randolph Hearst on Mount Sinai. I don't buy it."

"Laughton?"

"You going for yoks? Captain Blye on Mount Sinai? That's your idea of dignity?"

"Charles Winninger? Edmund Gwenn? Thomas Mitchell? Charles Coburn? Not necessarily in that order."

"All right, if you want to play it for laughs. I thought we were trying to get away from type casting."

"Eddie Robinson?"

"We-ell. He *could* play it. Eddie could play the bejesus out of it. But right now there's this talk about his being a fellow-traveler. He'll clear himself, sure, but right now. . . . We can't give a political tinge to this thing, it's too big —"

FUN, INC. is a demented department store, a five-and-ten turned schizoid. Behind Danny Atlas, in the window to the left, is an array of articles which dramatize the impishness of objects — the waywardness of utensils, the berserker willfulness of even the most pragmatically conceived tools. Cigars that explode. Water tumblers that leak. Ladles filled with transparent plastic so that they won't hold anything. Carna-

tions that squirt water. Rubber fingers. Forks whose tines crumble to the touch. Hatbands that leave a ring of white stain around the head. And, of course, soluble spoons, Danny's master work. Up above, racks of rubber masks by means of which any ordinary citizen can transform himself into demon, witch, drunk, hag, leper, hydrocephalic, Kallikak, bumpkin, pinhead, leering rapist or simpering adolescent. In the window opposite, three midgets: one inscribing homilies on the backs of baby turtles, another coloring portraits of Marilyn Monroe on scarves, the third painting Niagaras and nudes on beanie hats. In the corner of this window, a display of ties with slogans written across them (products of Leo Carney, manufacturer of "The Cravat with a College Education") — one of these, conceived by Al Kiefer, bears the message, *The Direst Straits Come in Jackets*. (This tie never sells.)

It is a cornucopia of non-sequiturs, this store — built on the premise that spoons can turn whimsical and even Bibles can stutter. But tonight Danny Atlas has no eyes for his wares. Almost 9:20. At 9:20 Anatole is supposed to —

"Daddy-o!"

It's Anatole, smack on the button.

"Hey, kid."

"I sneaked out, like you said. Got to get right back. Everything set on your end, pops?"

"It looks copacetic. Gil's meeting

Mort at 9:30 sharp. They should pass by here three, maybe four minutes later. If Gil gives me the wink that means he was able to swing it, they're going to Mort's hotel. We give them another four minutes. All right. Then I call you and you make with the tape, right?"

"Cool. If you make with the twenty first."

Danny pulls a bill from his pocket, hands it over.

"Anatole, you should learn not to be so mercenary. What we're dealing with here is a work of art. We are artists in a collaboration together. Like on a novel. Artists, when they talk all the time about money between themselves, it gives a false note."

"*This* better not be a false note," Anatole says, examining the twenty. "Tasty. I gotta blow now. Keep in touch."

9:23. Gil Lazarro, the one-legged general manager of Leo Carney's office, is sitting at his desk, thinking. This is the night of the great fitting-together, the universal jell, he is thinking about it. He thinks about things the way other people play tiddledewinks or go to Acapulco.

It seems to Gil Lazarro that he never began to think until he came to Broadway. Down on Mulberry Street he did a lot more running than thinking. For nineteen years, just about, he did nothing but run: first as a Western Union messenger boy, then pushing carts in the gar-

ment district, then making deliveries for a florist. A basketball scholarship at L.I.U. led him into another kind of running, and it paid off pretty well, what with the occasional fixes; then for three years he was with a pro football team and that kept him running too. In the army he ran plenty — through the African desert from Tripoli to Benghazi, then along the shore of Sicily, then up the beachhead at Salerno, then up and down Anzio. At Anzio he finally got tired. He got so tired one afternoon that he fell out for a snooze in a ditch and a half-track backed up and chewed his leg off.

A STANDSTILL, suddenly. For the rest of his life he was going to get a check every month, no matter whether he sprinted, sauntered, or squatted. His concept of life as an endless relay race in which Gil Lazarro kept passing the baton to Gil Lazarro was shattered; lying in the hospital, he felt that all the clocks were melting, the metronomes drooping, and it made him dizzy. After his discharge he took to hanging around Broadway, just so he could watch lots of people rushing back and forth while he stood still in one place. He stood and watched the runners everywhere: Roseland, the Palladium, the Tango Palace. In Danny Atlas' store, too. It was in Danny's that he got to talking with Leo Carney one day. When Leo offered him this job he

took it — winter was coming on, and Leo had a steam-heated office overlooking Broadway. But Gil remained a passionate student of people in motion. When they slowed down, he felt an urge, almost an obligation, to get them moving again. Tonight, at exactly 9:37, if all goes well, he is going to get some people into some really supersonic motion.

Of course, tonight would have been impossible without a big backlog of thinking. About the way things fit together, mostly. It started a few months after he went to work for Leo, the night he took Lovis Doreen, the stripper, to a spaghetti joint on West Forty-seventh. They were sitting around drinking dago red and Lovis asked him where his folks came from. He said, "Near Anzio," and took another slug of wine, then he thought: "Hey. Anzio. Where I lost my leg. Funny, the leg's over there but when the weather changes it feels like it was right here, with the rheumatizz. So things can be tied up even when they look far apart. Hey, now. Then there's this. The old man and the old lady come from Anzio, then they go to Mulberry Street and make me and I grow up and go to Anzio and leave my leg there. It's like a circle. Wait a minute — more circles. They've got lots of vineyards over there around Anzio. Make a whole lot of wine. I drink a lot of wine, right now I'm drinking a lot of wine. They must ship a lot of wine from

Anzio over here, so maybe I drink a lot of wine from Anzio. Right *now* I might be drinking a lot of wine from Anzio. It figures. But my leg's buried over there — maybe right in some vineyard somewhere, so maybe my leg goes into some grapes that get pressed into wine that gets sent over here that I drink. . . ."

By this time Lovis was running at the mouth about how some talent scout was in the Jim-Jam Club catching her act and there was a chance, a very good chance, that she would be signed for a remake of the Salomé story. When she reached that part of her tale she saw a funny expression on Gil's face. She took it, not unreasonably, for skepticism. "Listen, sweetie," she said, "you don't think I'm pulling your leg, do you?" He watched her take a swallow of wine and he said dreamily, "Hell, no. But you could be *drinking* it." Lovis was badly shaken by the remark. Every time he called after that she had to catch a train for Schenectady.

BUT THAT NIGHT was the turning point. He'd had a revelation — about the dovetailing of odds and ends, the fusion of opposites, the oneness of the whole works. He began to keep his eyes open, looking for sneaky relations, patterns, the interweavings. "You had to get yourself torn apart," Al Kiefer told him, "to become a monist — *there's* a loony fusion of opposites for you." Gil's mind became highly trained

in the job of assembling the most unlikely jigsaw puzzles. The training hasn't been wasted. In the last twenty-four hours he has done a herculean assembly job.

The oddments he has just tenoned together! Item: M-U-K needs a lead for this Old Testament picture. Item: the *Times* sign is controlled by a punched tape — a kid named Anatole helps adjust this tape — Danny Atlas is on very good terms with this Anatole, who is chronically in need of cash. Item: the telephone company has a certain private number, Murray Hill exchange, for testing purposes — this number gives a busy signal for the servicemen — Leo Carney knows the number because his brother-in-law works for the telephone company. Item: Biff Jordan, the Hollywood cowboy, is in town, traveling incognito to dodge his wife's detectives. Item: Mort Robell, the press agent, is the only guy in town who knows where Biff is holding up — he's got to know because he supplies Biff with girls. Item: Mort Robell has a room in a Times Square hotel with a view of the Times Building, because it is his practice to study the news sign, pick off the hottest flashes and phone them in to the columnists as inside tips. . . . Most of these facts, of course, are readily available to any citizen of the greater metropolitan district who is a reasonably alert reader and listener. Maybe there are dozens of people on The Street who

have all these tidbits crammed away in cobwebbed corners of their heads. But only Gil Lazarro, the pattern-maker, has the scope and perspective to put them together in a meaningful whole. That is precisely what Gil Lazarro has done, it is what he communicated last night, in a moment of creative frenzy, to Danny Atlas. Danny Atlas, of course, immediately called young Anatole into conference. . . .

9:26. Gil puts on his hat and heads for the elevator, on his way to meet Mort Robell. In another eleven minutes a whole lot of lovely oneness is going to erupt with a woosh from the Times Building. Times Square is going to drip away like a soluble spoon, in Danny Atlas' view. The whole borough of Manhattan is going to be drinking its own leg, in Gil Lazarro's view.

"All right. Bing Crosby? How's about Bing Crosby?"

"Nice guy, they don't come any nicer. Yet and still, you definitely don't want a crooner for this part. It takes away from the dignity. Besides, Bing's a sports-shirt personality. You take and put a cassock on him, like in *Going My Way*, he's *still* got definitely a sports-shirt personality. What you going for, saddle shoes on Mount Sinai?"

"Raymond Massey?"

"He makes it as an Honest Abe. In a log cabin, in a coonskin cap, socko. But listen, get in step with

the project. Try to think along Mount Sinai lines."

"Vittorio Gassman? Audie Murphy? Understand, I'm just thinking on my feet —"

"*With* your feet. Both clubbed."

"Rex Harrison? Adolphe Menjou? Say, now, Adolphe —"

AL KIEFER is in Benny Bliss's office at the Astor. He has finished drafting Benny's column for tomorrow, the copy's been sent off; now he is standing at the window, looking down at the mammoth Adam and Eve on the Bond Clothing sign and thinking large, brooding thoughts. Only 9:27. He would like to get some air but he can't leave — promised he would stay put until Gil Lazarro called. This hufty-maguffy stunt can't be pulled unless he, Al, can be reached by phone. He is sorry he got sucked into the whole brannigan. He is getting very, very tired of practical jokes.

Al Kiefer thinks he understands the difference between himself and his friends Gil and Danny. *He* lives in a petrified world, a world of bone and granite and molybdenum: bang your head against it and you wind up with a splitting headache. *They* refuse to accept a structured universe — they live in a world of sponge rubber, as malleable as Danny Atlas' nose — they are forever kneading it and forever being amazed by the unlikely shapes that spring up: humpbacks, ram's horns, gargoyles,

manatees, Loch Ness monsters. His world is fossilized, fixed, theirs is a fluid movie trance full of dissolves and process shots and improbable montages. Where they allow for miracles, he expects only pratfalls. It is their dedication to the miraculous, of course, that makes them incorrigible practical jokers. Both of them, each in his own way, are stalking the great melt, they are camp followers of the unexpected. And the practical joke is merely their way of precipitating the wonders they feed on. As for Al Kiefer, he has about exhausted his faith in miracles. His profession has soured him: when he sees a miracle he wants to examine the byline. Crouching behind the byline, he suspects, is a ghost writer. . . .

9:29. Why the hell doesn't Gil call? Al Kiefer needs some air.

9:29. Danny Atlas, too, is studying the Bond sign. Swinging his nose now to the left, now to the right. Thinking how, in the old country, things are hard, fixed, unstretchable, tagged, while here everything is like putty. In America a man's got to be a quick-change artist. He's got to make himself over every morning, keep trying on rubber masks for size. Here a man is never a finished product, always raw material, always ready for alterations.

Danny Atlas was ready for alterations at the tender age of seventeen, the day he stepped off the steamer

at Ellis Island. Back in Salonika, because his father was born a shoemaker it meant he was born a shoemaker too; no unfreezing allowed. Once he got used to the great American thaw, the first thing he did, by way of overhauling himself, was to change his name from Ionopoulos to Atlas. The next step, naturally, was to change his nose — and the plastic surgeon took out too much cartilage, giving the organ its extraordinarily high mobility. When the bandages were removed and Danny found he could touch either cheek with his nose he was transported. Suddenly he glimpsed the impermanence of things: Europe was a dirty plot to hide the great truth that man is an eternal work-in-progress and that within any object's rigid shell of appearance is a Bronx cheer. Beggars could become kings — from which it followed that carnations could squirt water at you. The moment Danny Atlas caught on to all this, he knew he had a calling. A few months later he established FUN, INC., basilica of the soluble spoon.

IN THE THIRTY ODD years since, Danny has become an addict of that most American of romps, the practical joke. He is a student, even an historian, of the subject. He has made a pilgrimage to the Farmers' Museum in Cooperstown, N. Y., to see the Cardiff Giant — the ten-foot-tall "petrified man" who was dug out of a Cardiff well in 1869 and

exhibited for years until somebody discovered it was a hunk of solid gypsum planted by a playful farmer named Stubb Newell. Standing outside his store, he loves to think about the day, back in the thirties, when a gang of Columbia students, dressed in overalls and carrying shovels and pick-axes, came down to Broadway, closed off a block with men-at-work signs, spent the day tearing up the pavement, and then disappeared into the night.

9:30. H-hour. Danny Atlas stops caressing his nose, looks expectantly up the street. There they are! On the button!

"How's it, Gil. What you say, Mort."

The two men stop.

"Hey, Danny," Gil says. "How's tricks. Can't stop now — going over to Mort's place to talk business. Trying to cook up a promotion stunt for Biff Jordan to push our ties."

"Great idea!" Danny says enthusiastically. "A cowboy with a name, he can sell merchandise like hotcakes. Even hotcakes. You take all these Hopalong Cassidy products."

"We'll kick it around," Mort says. "See you."

"Watch it," Danny says.

"Take it smiling," Gil says. His left eyelid closes, flutters significantly.

Danny watches as they cross the street and head for the hotel. He gives them another hot minute — 9:34 now — then waddles through

the store to his office, reaches for the phone, twisting his nose.

WELL, Lewis Stone."
"Great. Judge Hardy on Mount Sinai. You want to laugh it up, how about Abbott and Costello on Mount Sinai? Martin and Lewis?"

"Yule Brynner."

"For the King of Siam, sensational. On Mount Sinai, a dog. He's half Chinaman or something, right? We don't want an alien in this thing, it's too big."

"Mickey Rooney."

"If you're going to gag it up —"

"Anatole?" Danny Atlas's voice is quavering. "They just went to the hotel. Give them three more minutes. Then get going."

"Crazy, dads. Tasty. I'm with it."

Anatole is not doing this for the money. He is indebted to Danny Atlas, he owes his job to Danny. Anatole would do just about anything for Danny. Although the twenty doesn't make him jump salty, exactly. He's got eyes for that twenty. With the twenty he can get those crazy blue suede shoes with the white stitching, also pick up on some real crazy pot that a pusher on Forty-seventh just got in from Nuevo Laredo. . . .

Anatole cases the situation — tasty, boss nowhere in sight. Whistling "How High the Moon," he takes the tape from the desk drawer, sneaks back toward the machinery. . . .

"You can't oink Biff into just anything," Mort says. "He don't need the loot, understand."

"We could play his name up on the ties," Gil says from the window. "Make up slogans about him, like *When You Get Killed by Biff Jordan You Stay Dead*. That way —"

Gil straightens up, galvanized.

"Mort! Holy! Holy jumping! Come here, quick! I can hardly — you see what I see?"

Mort has jumped up from bed, he peers out. "What's eating you, kid? Where — what's going —"

"The sign, man! Down there on the sign!"

A headline is traveling around the Times Building: M-U-K EXECUTIVES IN EMERGENCY SESSION PICK BIFF JORDAN FOR LEAD IN TECHNICOLOR BIBLICAL EPIC, TRYING TO LOCATE COWBOY STAR. . . .

"This is the greatest!" Gil shouts. "Biff cuts Gable, Tracy, Boyer, all of them! You got to get hold of him right away, Mort, you got to let him know!"

"Sure, sure." Mort blinks, he's a little dazed. "But — look, where do I tell him to call? Where are these M-U-K guys at?"

"That's a point." Gil frowns; then his face brightens. "Tell you what, suppose I call Al? They know everything over in Bliss's office." He rushes to the phone, dials, waits. "Al? Gil Lazarro. Emergency, Al — you have any idea where these

M-U-K guys are meeting? Got to reach them right away. . . ." He slides a pencil from his pocket, writes on the wallpaper. "Right. . . . Murray Hill Seven . . . Nine . . . Three. . . . Got it. Solid. Thanks a million, Al. . . ."

Mort takes the receiver and dials. "Biff? You know what I just saw on the *Times* sign? They picked you for the lead in that new M-U-K picture! You're in, kid! Biff, you're gonna play God! They're looking for you right now, I got a number for you to call. Murray Hill. . . . That's right. *Murray Hill*. Seven. Nine. Three. . . ."

HERBERT MARSHALL?"
"He looks like he should part his hair in the middle."

"Walter Pidgeon."

"In tweeds, with a briar pipe, he's convincing. On Mount Sinai, in flowing robes, with a scepter, he's Walter Pidgeon at a costume ball somewhere."

"You know, it's too bad about Leslie Howard. If he was alive he —"

"Cute little actor, sure. But Pygmalion on Mount Sinai? Besides, there's the question of the accent."

"The accent could make the part. You take a poll, you'll find a lot of people figure God to talk with a British accent."

The phone rings. One of the conferees removes the Larrañaga from his mouth and picks up the receiver.

He listens. He listens for a long time. Then he says, "No. Oh, *no*." He puts the receiver down and breaks out in hysterical laughter. Minutes later, wiping his eyes, he gasps, "Gentlemen, you won't believe it. *I* don't believe it. One of our cameramen was walking down Broadway and he just saw a news flash on the *Times* sign. Said we just picked the man to play God — Biff Jordan!"

Wild hilarity around the table, howls, guffaws, a lunatic whinnying. It takes a long time for the outburst to subside.

Then, a pregnant silence.

Then —

"Well, now. Look, fellows. *I could* be crazy. This is just off the top of the head, see? I'm just throwing it out for discussion, understand. It's in a tentative spirit, but . . . Maybe there's a thought there? Shouldn't we kick it around a little? God as Will Rogers — I don't know, there's a folksy down-to-earth touch there, it just *might* work. . . ."

"Will Rogers on Mount Sinai. Well. Without the lariat, of course. Just keeping the folksy touch. . . ."

"Could be. *Could* be. It's a twist. . . ."

"After all, in *Green Pastures* they showed Heaven as a Louisiana fishfry and De Lawd was a levee Negro. Who beefed? It was standing-room-only all around the country. . . ."

"You'd throw out the sombrero, that's for sure. The spurs, too. What

you'd keep is just the drawl and a kind of just-folks, straight-shooting approach. Maybe we've finally got our teeth into something —"

Excited buzz around the table, more cigars are lit. Then somebody suggests a difficulty:

"One thing, if we want to stick on schedule. Where do we find this joker? I see by Benny Bliss's column that he's here in town but he's hiding out somewhere, his wife's got detectives on his tail. . . ."

"Cinch — we call Benny Bliss. They know everything in Benny's office. . . ."

AL KIEFER's office. Danny Atlas and Gil Lazarro have dropped in on their friend, they are holding a post-mortem.

"It's after ten," Danny says. "How many busy signals you figure Biff's got by now?"

"Keeps calling to be cast as God," Gil says. "Keeps getting the busy signal. It's too beautiful."

"Where are they going to shoot this epic?" Al Kiefer says listlessly. "On location? De Mille would do it on location."

He observes his friends, their faces are lit with exaltation. Danny bobbing on a sea of quickchangery, bloated with miracles; Gil gloating over the great hodge-podge, seeing dovetails and astonishing overlaps everywhere. They have vaulted the firmament tonight, they are toasting each other with pigeon's milk.

"All right," Al Kiefer says, "you pulled it off. The spoons are all dissolved, the hyphens are all riveted in place. Can we go home now?"

The phone rings, Kiefer answers. "Hello. . . . Yes, this is Benny Bliss's office. . . . No, Benny's gone for the night. This is Al Kiefer. . . . Who'd you say? M-U-K? . . . Sure, glad to help if I can. . . ." He listens, his mouth unhinges. "Yes. I see. Hold on a minute, will you?" He puts his hand over the mouthpiece and addresses himself to Gil. "This is a guy from the M-U-K meeting. You'll be pleased to know that they've solved their problem — they just picked Biff to play God. They want Biff's phone number."

Gil Lazarro gawks. Slowly, gingerly, amost prayerfully, he nods at Kiefer. Kiefer shrugs helplessly, nods back. He talks into the phone again. "You're in luck. A friend of Biff's is sitting in my office right now — I'll put him on." He hands the receiver to Gil, muttering "I wash my hands of it, it is God's doing."

"Hello," Gil says tensely. "Sure, sure I got his number. Glad to give it to you. You understand that it's confidential, of course. . . . It's Murray Hill. Seven. Nine. Three. . . ."

He hangs up, his hands trembling. The three of them sit silently, avoiding each other's eyes.

"You mean," Danny stutters finally, "M-U-K keeps trying to reach God and *they* get the busy signal too? This we got too?"

"You pattern-makers," Kiefer says, "you have builded a thing of mutton-brained magnificence. I bow in humility."

Gil Lazarro's eyes are glazed with reverential awe.

"My God," he whispers. "It's all too beautiful."

To everybody's surprise, including his own, he puts his arms on the desk, buries his head in them, and begins to sob uncontrollably.

10:13. . . .

"Nnngah, nnngah," Donald Perry says, looking down over Times Square.

He is sitting in a Chicago-bound DC-6, in a G.I. uniform with a Korea service bar on the tunic, folded hands swathed in bandages, head entirely domed with taped gauze. Through two narrow slits he is looking down at the shimmering lights of Times Square. What he is trying to communicate is that he would like very much to get out of this plane.

This is "legal kidnapping week" on the Columbia campus, where Donald Perry is a freshman. At precisely 3:30 this afternoon, as Donald was leaving his Spanish class, six students yanked him into a car and brought him to a nearby apartment. There they dressed him in this uni-

form, tied his hands and covered the ropes with bandages, gagged him and wrapped his head completely in gauze. At 9:43 they carried Donald aboard a plane at Idlewild, strapped him securely in his seat, explained to the stewardess and nearby passengers that their friend had been horribly burned in Korea and was going to the Mayo Clinic for special treatment, and disappeared. Donald has just now remembered that he has a Spanish exam coming up tomorrow morning and he still hasn't learned his irregular conjugations. "Lemme out of here!" he yells, thinks he's yelling. "If I don't learn the pluperfect of *hacer* by 8:40 tomorrow morning I'll —"

"Nnngah, nnngah, nnngah," the prim, matronly lady sitting next to him hears. She leans over and pats the young man on the knee. "Poor boy," she says. "You must be suffering terribly. It isn't easy, I know."

HER MIND is made up. The moment she gets back to St. Paul she's going to sit down and write a strong letter to her congressman. She begins to phrase the letter in her mind: "The housewives of America have reached the end of their patience. We demand the immediate bombing of all airfields north of the Yalu, in this hour of decision. . . ."

LETTER FROM TANGIER:

The Phoney Gold Rush

John V. Taberner

TANGIER apparently has everything a man could wish for: sun-drenched villas garlanded with flowers, hillsides glowing with red hibiscus and purple bougainvillea, tessellated minarets smiling down on one of the loveliest of Mediterranean bays. People go swimming almost the year round, yet even in summer the climate is not unbearably hot. Living is easy, business flourishing, and taxation practically nonexistent. It seems like an earthly paradise.

Yet those who know Tangier have no love for the place. The same phrase is repeated to me again and again: "You're lucky; you don't have to *live* in Tangier." Around the legations, and in the offices of the American and European companies located here, men and women say it with pent-up exasperation, thinking of the time when their release will come; in the large colony of

foreign residents who have staked everything to get here and now have no place else to go, it is said with hopelessness, and sometimes with despair.

You soon begin to understand what they mean. Once you delve beneath the surface beauty and charm, you find nastiness and even horror. There is no pity in Tangier, and no milk of human kindness. It is a lonely furtive place where each man distrusts his neighbor and dog eats dog, or whatever else he can get his teeth into. As you walk the street, strangers eye you calculatingly, as though trying to size you up and figure out your angle. Even among the professional people stationed here, who have no particular ax to grind, the poison has apparently spread, and there is little of the easy social intercourse and friendly getting-together that one expects in foreign service. A charming American girl confessed to me that she dreaded the evenings and often went back to work at the office because there was nothing else to

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do. No one invited her anywhere and she couldn't go out alone at night in Tangier; it would lead to embarrassing incidents and might actually be dangerous. "I've almost died of loneliness here," she said.

ON THE MAP you'll find this paradox of a city at the Atlantic tip of North Africa opposite Spain, where the narrow straits leading into the Mediterranean separate the two continents. It is of course much more than a city: the International Zone of Tangier consists of about 150 square miles of hilly country fringing the Atlantic in a sort of moon shape. The population is estimated at some 160,000, though each year it increases by leaps and bounds. Moreover, any figure you take can only be approximate, because the bulk of the population is made up of Arabs, who object to being counted and are adept at dodging the census-taker. These Arabs, together with a large number of Spaniards, live in the médina, or Moorish town, which is medieval, picturesque, and incredibly filthy. Most of the foreign residents — at least in the beginning — have their houses and apartments in the new Tangier, which begins outside the walls of the crowded Moslem city and stretches round the bay, into the hinterland and up the mountain, on top of which millionaires' mansions with tiled courts and splashing marble fountains sparkle in the sunlight,

and magnificent eye-catching gardens are set in stately wooded parks. For Tangier is not completely heartless: to a favored few it gives great and tangible rewards; thousands flock here year by year, drawn by the magnet of easy money and the hope of riches. Tangier welcomes them; for a while it may seem to bring them good fortune, until with the cunning of a cardsharp it persuades them to throw caution to the winds. Then the luck changes and suddenly everything is lost. Those who can scrape up the fare, go back home; otherwise there is nothing to do but slink away to the médina, to eke out an existence in the muck of the Arab quarter, where no one asks questions because no one cares.

However, when the visitor arrives in Tangier, he sees no such lugubrious shadows. One overwhelming impression blots out everything else: you have landed in a town which is in the middle of a fantastic boom. Before your eyes Tangier is bursting out across the landscape. Buildings are getting taller, streets are growing longer; all over the city a haze of dust hangs in the air as the loaded trucks trail each other, dumping sand, bricks, and steel. The sound of hammering goes on endlessly so that you stop noticing it — it becomes as naturally a part of the Tangier noises as the cries of the lottery-ticket sellers or the agonized little "peep-peep" of the swarming, protesting busses.

All day and all week including Sundays and holidays the pouring of cement goes on. Plots of land are snapped up at a hundred times the normal asking price, houses that rented at forty dollars a month are now offered at two hundred, take it or leave it. Meanwhile, around the bay, gleaming new resort hotels and amusement palaces are transforming sandy wastes into a playground for the newly rich.

Travel agencies, hotels, and bars are doing a land-office business. A pot-bellied gentleman will hurry with a fat briefcase into the offices of Air France to charter a plane to New York; the matter is urgent, he declares, and price is unimportant. Flashy characters in tight-waisted suits impatiently mill around in the telephone building while a harassed clerk tries to put them through to Paris or Istanbul or Hong Kong. Little knots of rat-eyed men huddle together on street corners cooking up deals or furtively passing out wads of bills from bulging wallets. In half an hour you'll hear snatches of conversation in a dozen different tongues, but you don't have to understand the language to know what the topic is: in Tangier there's no time for small talk — money is the only thing that counts.

There's a fly-by-night quality about these avid profit-seekers, whose eyes look anywhere but directly at you. What's at the back of this sudden prosperity? you ask.

No one has struck oil. What does it all mean? What is causing Tangier's phoney gold rush?

THE VERY ODD nature of Tangier's government. The Zone of Tangier is international: since 1945 eight powers — one of them the United States — have shared in its control. But when you get eight hens to sit on a single egg, none of them is likely to prove a particularly fond mother. So what you have got is an example of international government with the lid off. In Tangier anything goes, with the result that there has been an unparalleled influx of enterprises honest and otherwise; business men, refugees, and thugs have congregated here from almost every nation under the sun. Anyone can settle here, no matter what sort of a criminal record he has — all he needs is a valid passport. If he tries murder as an occupation he'll undoubtedly run into a little difficulty, but there are endless other possibilities. To make the prospect even rosier, Tangier has no income tax, no inheritance tax, no tax on production or sales, no capital gains tax, and no inspection of books. In fact, a man needn't even keep books, and his bank manager will obligingly record him as a code number in *his* book, so that no one can ever hope to find out who he is, what he does, or how much he is worth.

This may sound idyllic to the av-

erage business man struggling to keep pace with rising taxation, and battling with pettifogging and burdensome government regulations. But there are drawbacks to this version of rugged individualism. It's not apt to attract the most desirable type of citizen. It would be untrue to say that the postwar influx of foreigners into Tangier is made up entirely of crooks, pimps, and touts, but uncomfortable numbers of shady characters have found their way here, and too often they are the ones who have been conspicuously successful. To make your mark in Tangier, you'd better be unblushingly avaricious and more than a little unscrupulous, otherwise the competition is too tough. And you must never trust your neighbor — he's probably up to no good, and he may be after your hide.

Because Tangier is a free port, there's not too much scope for smuggling, except outward to countries like Spain and Italy. A number of prewar luxury yachts have been converted for this purpose, and you will almost certainly see one or more of them riding at anchor in Tangier Bay. Once in a while something goes wrong — a double-cross, or the owner finds the hush money too steep — and an arrest is made. I sat one evening in Dean's Bar chatting to a svelte Englishwoman of about forty with luminous brown eyes and a delightful sense of humor, who rattled on about popcorn and

princelings and who obviously knew her way around Tangier. In answer to my question she said that oh yes, she'd met people who she believed had made money smuggling such items as liquor and tobacco, but of course that sort of thing was now definitely passé. The next afternoon I read to my astonishment that she'd been clapped into jail for bringing in thousands of dollars worth of raw opium, and in the subsequent excited tittle-tattle over cocktails I learned that Tangier is rapidly becoming the world center of the drug traffic, an honor that used to be held by Hong Kong.

BUT IN TANGIER it isn't necessary to risk brushing with the local police in order to make your pile, particularly if you have enough cash to start out with. The import-export business is a most promising field. Tangier imposes a straight 12½ per cent tax on all goods imported (except silks, precious metals, and jewels), and there is no tax on anything "in transit" — a term which is liberally interpreted by certain customs inspectors.

Suppose the president of an Italian construction company needs American machine tools but his government won't allow him the necessary dollars to buy with. You order the stuff sent to you in Tangier "in transit," remove the labels, and sell it to him at a price in Italian lire — adding a fat margin of profit

of course for your trouble. Here you change your lire into dollars, Tangier being a wide-open money market, settle with the company in the United States, and you're ready for the next customer. This may be a manufacturer of French silks, who complains that his business in France is being throttled by high taxes. He "sells" the silk to you at little more than cost, which means he pays his government practically no tax. You then get rid of it at the normal price on the world market, splitting a nice profit with him which for both of you is income-tax free. And the wonderful thing is that you're absolutely safe. *He* may get caught and have to disappear for a while, but *you* are sitting pretty in Tangier.

Though governments in almost every other part of the world have a rooted objection to having gold anywhere but in a hole in the ground, Tangier is more liberal in her outlook. You can trade in it here as much as you please, provided you pay the $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent import duty. Of course, in other countries it's illegal to take gold out, so your source of supply may be a bit risky. The scheme is to get hold of a light plane (your profits will soon pay for this), fly in as a tourist to some spot like Angola or Zanzibar, and then trust to luck and your ingenuity.

But perhaps your means are rather modest and you have only a

few hundred dollars to play around with. Then you can become the president of your own bank. Or you can set yourself up in the money-changing business. All you need is a hole-in-the-wall with a counter and a telephone. If you take a stroll down the crawling spit-laden little street which takes you into the Little Socco (a square in the médina from which radiate Arab leather and jewelry stores, night clubs, and houses of prostitution), you'll see dozens of kiosks where men earn a profitable living out of foreign exchange. There's no such thing as a black market in Tangier — here it's quite legal. Outside the dollar area most countries have been forced to block their currencies to prevent a disastrous drain on dollars, but here you can buy or sell any kind of money, in any quantity, any day of the week.

PERHAPS the saddest feature of Tangier is what has happened to the Arabs, who make up about nine-tenths of the population, and to whom in the final analysis Tangier really belongs. If you've ever visited Fez or Marrakech, you know that in spite of dirt and smell and crushing poverty, the native towns have fascination and charm. Naturally, if you're rich — and to the average Arab anyone who makes five dollars a week is rich — merchants will charge you a higher price for what you buy, but that's business. Other-

wise you will find them delightful people, open-hearted and amazingly hospitable.

But in Tangier it's different. There the Arabs have lost their roots. The Moslem virtues have gone, and the worst of the Christian vices have come in. Tangier-Médina has a worn-out predatory desperation about it, like the derelict creatures who totter out of dark alleyways at night and thrust their flaming cheeks and dyed hair at you with a leer.

It's worth taking a morning to explore the médina and climb up to the casbah, where the old palace of the Sultan, a pitiful relic of former glory, stares blankly out across the straits. But you need a guide along. In a glass case outside the gleaming marble French post office on the Boulevard Pasteur in the new town you see a large map of the city. But when it came to the médina the cartographers gave up; it appears on the map as a blank area decorated with a few wispy lines leading nowhere. It's a place of dark narrow streets and tortuous passageways, a maze of windowless walls and dank cul-de-sacs. The old Moorish warriors built it as a secret place where they could rest up after foraging raids on other tribes. In its corkscrew passages you come unexpectedly upon the green and gold mosaic of a

mosque, or the crenelated walls of an ancient palace. On its long flights of stone steps, donkeys brush past you and goats poke their noses into your pockets. Alleyways converge on little open squares or market places, where mounds of flat round loaves are piled up on primitive stalls, and pieces of evil-smelling meat are cooking on skewers over charcoal pots.

Outside the city walls is Tangier's bidonville. There, in a deplorable collection of shacks made out of tin cans, corrugated cardboard, and bits of packing cases, with no water and not a vestige of sanitary arrangements, Arab families live, eat and sleep among their garbage and excreta in unimaginable filth and squalor.

Visiting journalists have railed unceasingly at conditions they have found in the International Zone of Tangier, yet nothing has been done. Tangier is vicious because her prosperity is based on the misfortunes of others. Her recurrent nightmare is of a peaceful world, when ordinary decent citizens can once more sit down on an evening and read their newspaper without fear. For in such a case her enterprises would collapse like a pricked balloon, and her phoney prosperity would be shattered as though an earthquake had struck.

THEATER

Linnell Jones

Angel Is A Naughty Word

Broadway Through the Backer's Eye

ONE OF the most important citizens in New York theatrical circles is Joseph R. Shelcup, the gentleman who, under the impression that he was buying oil stock, invested \$5,000 in *Oklahoma!* and has been living the good life ever since.

Oddly enough, nobody in New York seems to be personally acquainted with Mr. Shelcup, although practically everyone knows somebody who knows a friend of his. Another peculiar thing about the man is that his name sometimes pops up as Shelby, or Schultz, or

even Breckenridge; again it appears that it wasn't *Oklahoma!* he backed — it was *The Voice of the Turtle*, or *Harvey*, or *South Pacific*. But names and shows notwithstanding, the moral of the tale is always the same — man meets show, man backs show, man makes fortune.

Under the spell of the Shelcup story, close to 5,000 people each year raid their mattresses and hopefully invest \$5,000,000 in Broadway productions. Once in a heliotrope moon, one of these angels makes a bundle; a few take away a fairish profit; but the great majority end up heavy of heart and light of purse. "We was robbed," they grumble, and in a sense they were.

Now most of these patrons of the theatrical arts realize that the odds are against them when they put money in a show. They realize that of every five productions which get

Linnell Jones, who for some time has strained eyes and brains on his "Little Wonder System of Theatrical Investing," is no mere theorist on this subject, but an old hand at risking other people's money. His article, "How Top Was My Secret," appeared in the September 1952 MERCURY.

to the rehearsal stage, only one will ultimately show a profit. But they also know a hit show may pay off at the rate of \$5 for every one invested, and that in the case of an *Oklahoma!* the ratio may be a fabulous \$40 to one. Besides which, every investor is convinced that he's a smart fellow and knows how to pick the money-makers. As he figures it, only dopes back turkeys, and obviously he's no dope.

In spite of his laudable self-confidence, the end of the story is the same eleven times out of twelve — show opens Tuesday, show closes Saturday. And after the saddened angel wipes off the blood, he spends the next few weeks cursing the sacred name of Joseph R. Shelcup. Indeed, exasperation may betray him into voicing the most heretical thought of all — that Mr. Shelcup doesn't even exist.

Well, I happen to be in a position to testify that this famous gentleman does exist, because I know him. He lives on East 73rd Street in New York, and is now in his middle fifties. His name isn't Shelcup, he never thought *Oklahoma!* was an oil stock, and it wasn't \$5,000 he invested — it was \$4,500. But it's entirely true that the show made a poor man's fortune for him: \$180,000 to date. Indeed, his would be a most heart-warming story except for one distressing fact: since 1939, when *Oklahoma!* opened, he has dropped \$218,000 trying to repeat

his success with other shows. And right now he hardly believes in Joseph R. Shelcup himself.

As a fellow who has been hanging around theatrical offices ever since *South Pacific* was a pup, I have a few comments on theatrical investing which I'd like to get off my chest. But first a few words about the financial set-up of Broadway shows.

BROADWAY SHOWS are financed at their estimated production costs, which range from \$50,000 for a one-set, low-cost play to \$300,000 or better for the most elaborate musicals. Investors are sold "units" of shows, a unit being one-fiftieth of the total production cost. Thus, for the \$50,000 play, a unit costs \$1,000; for the big musical, \$6,000. Fractions of units may also be sold, in some cases as low as one-sixteenth of a unit. In addition, many shows have a twenty per cent overcall provision in the contracts signed by the investors, so that if extra rehearsal time is needed or out-of-town tryout losses are high, the producer may soak investors an additional \$200 for every \$1,000 invested. Somehow, an amazingly small number of shows operating under this overcall provision fail to ship out for the additional cash.

After the show opens, if there are any profits they go to the investors until their investments are paid off. From that point on, the producer takes fifty per cent of the profits

and the investors split the remaining fifty per cent in proportion to the number of shares they own. Depending on running expenses, theater capacity, and admission charges, shows must run at capacity from ten weeks to a year in order to break even. In the case of a hit, there are usually additional profits from road shows, summer stock, movie rights, and foreign rights. Indeed, the person lucky enough to back a smash may still be receiving dividends ten years after opening night. An attractive prospect, you'll agree — almost as attractive as the cheddar which lures the mouse into the jaws of the trap.

ANOTHER thing. In any given theatrical season, total profits come reasonably close to balancing investments. However, it should be remembered that investors, in most cases, supply one hundred per cent of the financing, but never get more than fifty per cent of the profits. And a final peculiarity of show business financing: theaters which house plays and musicals employ a percentage-of-the-gross system, protected with stop clauses, which assures the theater owner of making a profit, even though the show may lose all kinds of money.

So much for background. Now let's get back to the angels who flap their wings around this unpredictable financial candle.

As might be expected, Broadway

backers comprise as varied a collection of fish as one is likely to observe north of the Deland, Florida, marine aquarium. Perhaps a fourth of them are in show business and have a valid reason for risking their money. A man who runs a company which builds scenery will buy a piece of a production, in return for which the producer gives him the scenery contract. Owners and operators of independent theaters, such as Louis Lotito, Howard Cullman, Billy Rose, and Ben Marden may put money into shows which play their houses. Actors, stage designers, and directors frequently invest with producers who may give them jobs in future shows. By and large, however, these are shrewd gentlemen who know enough about show business to make certain they will get a square shake for their money. In the Broadway poker game, they can quickly spot a producer who is dealing off the bottom of the script. Properly speaking, they aren't angels at all — they are pros who back other pros. Certainly they are gamblers, but they have more in common with Aquatania Joe than with the tinhorns who try to guess which shell the little pea is under.

The remaining seventy-five per cent are the true angels, a cockeyed assemblage of stage-struck dowagers and their stage-struck daughters, paunchy businessmen who hope that if they can brush up against the glamour of the theater a little will

rub off, society hangers-on who want to be able to say they are doing something with their time and money, manufacturers who hope they'll get to meet chorus girls, wives of manufacturers who are crazy about culture. And then there are the friends—friends of the producer, of the director, of the producer's mother, of the star's uncle, friends of friends, and friends of friends of friends.

THESE are the people who each year give the theater a badly needed financial transfusion, with plenty of hope but little chance of return. Needless to say, the theater gives them no thanks and wastes no pity on them. Show people are thoroughly contemptuous of them, even when buttering them up for the frying pan. They are the outsiders, the lepers who should have the decency to remain on the other side of the footlights. In fact, to the average theatrical pro, the words "backer" and "angel" are naughty words, somewhat stronger than "nincompoop" and containing a suggestion of canine ancestry.

I've been skating around the fringes of show business for some years myself, and while I must admit that I don't care much for backers as a class, I find myself puzzled at the psychopathic enmity they arouse in theater circles. I suppose part of it is due to the normal scorn of the professional for the

amateur; but I also suspect that much of it stems from the con man's impatience with the sucker who fights to keep from being swindled. Prospective backers are becoming increasingly hard to convince these days, even when they are plied with liquor at fancy auditions; and the sweating producer and his aides find themselves muttering, "The bums ought to be glad to mail in their checks anonymously."

Actually, speaking as one who has been on both sides of the great theatrical divide, I have no serious quarrel with the backers of straight plays. At worst, they are private rather than public nuisances since they usually make their choices in the quiet of their studies by merely reading scripts. I must admit, however, that the people who show up at backers' auditions for musical shows fill me with horror. For the most part, they are boors who seed the floor with cigarette ashes, lap up the producers' whisky, and talk loudly while actors and actresses are trying to sing them the score. They bring with them dogs, small children, mistresses, and maiden aunts. Frequently they are far from sober. A surprising majority are tone deaf and taste deaf, and the only reason anyone puts up with them is that they have money.

Actually, auditions are silly per se, and it is quite understandable that they tend to attract silly people. An actor, racing through a sum-

mary of a complicated plot like a long-playing record spinning at 78, can only make it sound ridiculous, and the singers have little chance of competing with the side talk and cigarette smoke. Under audition conditions, even a Broadway success like *South Pacific* would sound like a lot of boring noise. As any professional will testify, to judge a musical you need only three things: a copy of the book and lyrics, a phonograph record of the music played by a fairish pianist, and a list of the people who will stage and appear in the production. And of the three, the third is the most important, for if the director, librettist, composer, and stars are all pros, with records of past success, chances are the result will be pro. If they are unknowns, the odds are good that the play will flop.

Yet no one has figured out a way to eliminate auditions. In fact, as angel resistance to the wheedling of producers increases, more auditions are necessary. No longer are they confined to New York; they are held in Philadelphia, Boston, and Washington, and this fall Robert Alda, seeking backers for *Herald Square*, journeyed to Toronto, Buffalo, and points in between. He reported the response quite satisfactory, which may mean that there is a vast reservoir of angels in the hinterland who, being unacquainted with lure and hook, are less wary than the Manhattan species.

I have indicated that the rallying cry of the backer is the magical ratio, five to one — one success in every five productions. Actually, for all but a few investors, these odds are completely unrealistic, and for a simple reason: of the dozen or so successes produced each year, at least half are pre-financed by friends and associates of established producers, or by the producers themselves. All of which means that the run-of-the-checkbook investor is automatically barred from putting his money on many shows which figure to be successful and has to settle for the long shots.

WHEN a Rodgers and Hammerstein production comes along, the pals of this peerless pair line up like a premier crowd at Radio City to beg the privilege of buying units. John Van Druten is forced to dole out shares of his plays like a mother with a lot of kids and a little jam. If Cole Porter so much as approaches a piano with a reflective look in his eye, the room will be filled with friends waving wallets. True, the theater's top craftsmen may turn out shows which crash in disaster, but their records are so far above average that backing them is like betting on the Yanks.

To point this situation up, let's run through the list of Broadway successes last season, including shows which have not yet made their production costs, but stand a reasonable

chance of so doing, either on Broadway or on tour.

First off, there were two "reading" shows — Shaw's *Don Juan in Hell* and Emelyn Williams' excursion into Dickens — which made money, the former a vaultful, the latter enough for a few cartons of cigarettes. Neither was open to average theatrical investors.

Six shows, *The Constant Wife*, *I Am a Camera*, *Mrs. McThing*, *Point of No Return*, *Wish You Were Here*, and *The Male Animal* were difficult to invest in unless you happened to be a buddy of the producers.

One show, *Gigi*, which may recoup its Broadway losses on tour, was entirely financed by its producer, Gilbert Miller.

Five shows, *Fourposter*, *Pal Joey*, *The Shrike*, *Top Banana* and *New Faces* were open to outside investors. The first two are still making big money. *The Shrike* paid off \$2 to one. At this writing, the other pair are still trying to get their investment back.

In other words, of the fourteen big plays and musicals produced during the 1951-1952 season, only five welcomed outside investments.

Now, let's refigure the odds. In all, 75 shows were put on last year of which 14 either made good commercially or have a chance of making good. That would appear to give the investor the usually quoted odds of 5 to one. However, if we eliminate the productions from which the aver-

age angel was barred, we reach a total of 61 shows of which only five made or will possibly make money. Consequently, instead of bucking odds of 5 to one, the outsider faced odds of 61 to 5, or roughly 12 to one. And that's a pretty far-fetched quotation on any race track.

Of course, to a limited number of insiders who call Hammerstein "Oscar" and Hayward "Leland," the percentages are far more reasonable. Able to back shows which are packed with talent, written by successful playwrights, and produced by topnotchers, these "inside" investors stand a fair chance of realizing a profit over the years. But the outsider has no such option; he is forced to play the game of theatrical poker with no chance at all to bet aces.

IN THE LIGHT of these scary statistics, would you like to climb aboard the thin-gravy train? Well, perhaps I can give you a few pointers.

Suppose we begin with the usual question — which types of shows are most apt to show a profit? It so happens that I recently made a survey of the past four theatrical seasons, breaking down productions into classes and figuring their financial history. Here is a summary of what I found:

1. *Musicals*. Not exactly money in the bank, but the most reasonable facsimile thereof in show business.

If a person were to invest an equal amount in every show which came along, he would make a small profit — and this is true of no other type of production. In the past four seasons, 10 shows turned a profit and 27 showed a loss, but the winners included such platinum mines as *Guys and Dolls*, *The King and I*, *Kiss Me Kate*, and *South Pacific*.

2. *Musical Dramas and Operas*. All shows in this group should be required by law to carry the label "Smallpox," in spite of the fact that they frequently win excellent notices from the critics. For many months after *Lost in the Stars* opened to kudos, the Playwrights Company which produced it sarcastically displayed on its bulletin board a letter from Billy Rose stating that he admired script and music but had decided not to invest because he didn't think they added up to anything "commercial." The last laugh was Billy's — the show ran a season and lost \$30,000. On another occasion the critics even fooled the astute Mr. Rose. After the rave notices for the musical version of *Street Scene* appeared, he knocked out a column calling himself five kinds of chump for refusing to back it and bring it into his theater. How much of a chump he was can be judged by the fact that this admirable production wound up losing \$200,000.

To come down to cases, during the four seasons under discussion, 8

serious musicals opened and all 8 lost money — better than \$700,000 altogether.

3. *Revue*s. The record indicates that revues are almost as bad bets as heavy musicals. Since the fall of 1948, 12 have been produced and as of this instant, none has been profitable, although the current *New Faces* may eventually get into the black. Total losses have been well over a million. Here, too, critical acclaim means little. Last season, for instance, the Bert Lahr song-and-dancer, *Two on the Aisle*, got excellent notices and dropped \$240,000.

4. *Comedies*. Here the nomenclature gets fuzzy, since the dividing line between comedy and drama is thin indeed. However, if we interpret the word "comedy" liberally, there are more happy-ending plays which reach the boards than any other form of theatrical show. The percentage of flops is considerable — 18 hits in 90 tries, or about 2 successes to 9 failures — but when a comedy gets good notices, it has the impact of the Queen Mary going through a half-inch sheet of ice. Such productions as *Mister Roberts*, *The Moon Is Blue*, *The Happy Time*, *Harvey*, *Life with Father*, and *Born Yesterday* are America's answer to Kimberly.

5. *Literary Comedies*. Serious comedies, such as *The Cocktail Party* and *The Lady's Not for Burning*, fall into a special category. The percentage

of winners is surprisingly high — nearly fifty per cent — but more to the point is the fact that even the plays which succeed pay off in unsalted peanuts, say \$1.13 on the dollar. The astute angel should limit his investment in this class to a pair of seats in the fifth row center.

6. *Drama*. This type of play should be approached with caution, if not with fear and trembling. In the period studied, 63 were produced and only 6 were successes, a ratio of 10 to one. Worse than that, even the successes seldom are the crazy money-makers that angels like to talk about. Backers of *Detective Story*, for instance, only received \$2 for every dollar invested, and in the case of *Death of a Salesman* the ratio was little better than \$3 for one.

7. *Classics*. Shakespeare and his cronies, alas, no longer pay off. The only recent exception was *As You Like It*, which made a modest \$16,000 profit on a \$75,000 investment, largely due to the fact that Katharine Hepburn's legs received star billing.

THE FOREGOING FIGURES and folderol add up to one simple rule: the wise angel confines his investments to musical book shows and comedies, leaving dramas and classics to the patrons of the arts, and revues to the elderly bucks.

So far, I'm afraid I've painted a rather pessimistic picture of angels and their chances, and perhaps I haven't been entirely fair. Actually, the racket can be beaten, and I'll be glad to prove this statement by telling a trite but nevertheless truthful tale.

Two summers ago, an angel who shall be nameless hired me to assist him in selecting shows. Being a conscientious — not to mention bull-headed — fellow, I spent a month compiling statistics, including some of those I've listed, and on that basis I worked out a non-patented Little Wonder System of Theatrical Investing.

My employer was impressed, and during the last season he invested \$32,000 in legitimate productions. As of September 1 of this year, his ledger showed the following:

Investments	\$32,000.00
Return	32,176.34
Profit	176.34

In other words, this gentleman received a return of 0.55 per cent on his investment. Of course, he could have gotten ten times that amount by buying any good stock, but he didn't complain. By that time he had learned enough about the game to realize that it's a lucky angel who winds up with 0.55 per cent of his shirt.

Milton Klonsky

The Comic-Strip-Tease of Time

Smollett, Hogarth, and the Yellow Kid

COMIC STRIPS are so intimately bound up with our national life that it seems, somehow, intellectually lewd, almost un-American, to peer and probe beneath their surface appearance. Dick Tracy, Blondie, Li'l Abner, Moon Mullins, and the rest are as well known as Generals and Presidents. Every day, exposed in their boxes of light, their movements are followed by millions of eyes all over the United States. The services they perform and the needs they fulfil are real. For comic strips, like the daily newspapers in which they appear, re-enact a vast and solemn American ritual — the Strip Tease of Time.

This strip tease, of course, has no ending and achieves no final revelation. Just as the newspaper reports events immediately as they occur, without the long teleological view of

history, so the comic strip portrays action that is never consummated. The formula of the strip is used to provide direction for a plot, continually pared and subplotted, but going nowhere. With each issue, suspense is aroused and discharged in a little climax without relief, anticipating only another climax tomorrow and tomorrow, until, just before the final blackout, Time's overwhelming secret is almost but never revealed — the strip then carrying on from where it left nothing off.

Some successful and famous comics, such as "The Gumps," have survived their authors, and, in rare cases, even the newspapers where they first appeared. Their casts of characters are self-contained, hermetically sealed by formula from any growth or change. Once set in motion, they can go on and on in the same lockstep for years, and it takes a major turn in the American ethos to effect even a slight shift in their direction.

The formula of a comic strip is

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always very simple. For a generation, "Little Orphan Annie" has endured all the Perils of Pauline at the hands of foreign villains, having almost been burned alive many times, thrown off cliffs, drowned in whirlpools, split in two by a buzz saw, etc., but always winning through with the help of her dog Sandy and her millionaire stepfather, Daddy Warbucks. "Blondie" has lived for years on the soap-opera myth that the American male may be a sap, but the little woman can hold things together. "Joe Palooka" has been fighting for the heavyweight championship of the comics ever since Dempsey knocked out Firpo; and "Dick Tracy" has been catching and killing a larger assortment of crooks than exist in the Mafia.

When, after many years, a celebrated strip recasts its characters and formula, or expires, it marks the close of an era as definitely as a style of dress or slang going out of fashion. The cocky, sadistic, tough-talking "Yellow Kid" of the late 1890's — from whose name, incidentally, the term "yellow journalism" was derived — has been superseded by the still more violent, sophisticated, and sensational comics of our own time, as the old-fashioned journalism of Pulitzer and Hearst has been streamlined by their successors. "Krazy Kat," "Happy Hooligan," "Mutt and Jeff," and "The Katzenjammer Kids" were products of a more genteel era.

Modern comic books and newspaper strips, read by all classes and age groups with equal fervor, have replaced the old slapstick with realistic depictions of torture, murder, and pathological sex. Those days of innocence when we believed the "funnies" were primarily for children are gone — and with them the old sexual taboos of Puritanism. Comic strips now exhibit women as lush as those in the beer and cigarette ads. Others, such as "Winnie Winkle" or "Joe Palooka," where sex was once a minor display, have had to be revamped to satisfy their public. And in the latest science-fiction comics, a beautiful professor's daughter or an amorous Martian Queen are as essential to the formula as space ships, ray blasters, and thought machines.

OCCASIONALLY, however, a comic strip remains embalmed in the juices of another time, unable to renew itself, yet too valuable a property to be abandoned. "Maggie and Jiggs," for example, a strip burlesquing the social *gaffes* and foibles of the immigrant *nouveaux riches* at the beginning of the century, has lost much of its point now that the upper and middle classes have learned to forget their manners. In any event, none of the really important old-timers are ever forgotten. Their names and typical wisecracks color the daily speech, and their faded pictures merge gradually

into the family album of America where they are preserved.

Most strips in the past repeated the same comic routine each day with only minor changes, like a Tibetan prayer wheel turning its devotions round and round for all occasions. But modern adventure strips, with their realistic dialogue and three-dimensional drawing, resemble old movie cliff-hangers and pulp-fiction serials. The story can go on for months, the main characters forever being lost and saved in little nicks of time. Despite this apparently broader scope, however, their nature is still the same. The rigid daily pattern is repeated in an overall timeless and shapeless continuum; and the strip-action never moves beneath, or removes, the inexhaustible surfaces of appearance.

Like all cultural forms, comic strips have a philosophy, whether they like it or not. They recall nothing so much as the Roman materialist poet Lucretius' theory of vision as a constant shedding by things of rarified films of themselves, solid images which strike upon our eyes. When we come down to it, the materialist reduction of reality to "the concrete" that is observed by the five senses, is also repeated by the comics in their own reduction of reality to a box of immediate sensation. We can even trace the history of the comics to eighteenth-century England, the Age of Enlightenment, when the materialist philoso-

phy of Lucretius, transformed by Newton, held sway again.

IT'S HARD to think of the comic strip as having a shady past in Europe, instead of being born virginally in our own age, like jukeboxes and washing machines. But as a story-in-pictures, it is obviously derived from the novel and from caricature — both of these dominant art forms in the eighteenth century.

England at that time was so powerful and prosperous and sure of its destiny that it felt itself, like America today, to be the first-born heir of all the ages. Behind were centuries of so-called Gothic darkness and superstition, and ahead could be only more enlightenment and further progress toward the New.

The middle classes at that time, once considered *canaille*, now were citizens with a stake in Parliament and even an interest in the arts. Naturally, they were little concerned about poetry or oil painting, which were in the expensive domain of the aristocracy. But novels, by their rootedness in the common daily life, won an audience for literature greater than any before. The serial form of these novels still had an immense appeal as late as the nineteenth century, even across the Atlantic, where crowds of people in New York and Boston are reported to have waited at the pier for the steamer bringing new chapters of Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*.

The five great comic novelists of England, Smollett, Fielding, Stern, Richardson, and Defoe, appeared almost in a group. All of them had an intimate connection with early journalism. They shared its materialist notion of matter as the body of reality, and also — the heart of the matter — its sense of time. The scenes and actions of Smollett's novels, especially, frequently resemble detached anecdotes taken from a newspaper or magazine of the period. His books, sporting such comic-strip titles as *Peregrine Pickle*, *Roderick Random*, *Humphrey Clinker*, followed their own unpredictable wills from chapter to chapter and could have gone on indefinitely. With their tortuous plots unwinding upon the spool of a forgone conclusion; their crude characterizations drawn almost to the point of caricature; and their uncertain structure wavering between the narrative and the informal essay (just as the journals of the time wavered between reporting and editorializing) — yet with everything drawn in bright primary color, full of slapstick vigor and spiked with climaxes — these early novels were hardly regarded as literature. But they were read passionately by millions who had never read Milton or Dryden or Pope.

During the same period, this new mass audience was shared by the cartoon art of Hogarth and his successors. And in the fusion of the two — the serialized novels of Smol-

lett and the cartoons of Hogarth — the style of the comic strip was conceived.

WHAT HOGARTH ACCOMPLISHED for the first time in his famous series of engravings — *The Rake's Progress*, *Marriage à la Mode*, *The Harlot's Progress*, etc. — was a translation of novelistic situations and types into cartoons. He aimed primarily, he said, "to treat [his] subjects as a dramatic writer." His highly moralistic depiction of the evils of drink, lechery, gambling, and sloth, with the evildoers coming to a bad end at the bottom of "Gin Lane," was of course in accord with middle-class piety and righteousness.

As an artist, Hogarth's ambition was not to abstract and idealize nature, but to see her in all her literalness and materiality. He wanted to strip the ideal of Renaissance painting of its mysticism and reduce it to a physical average. In his work, the knobs, twists, and bulges of flesh of ordinary mankind superseded the perfect forms of Venus and Apollo. As he came to realize later on, however, the concept of the Average was an ideal as abstract as that of the Beautiful.

Hogarth served to widen the split between "high" and "low" art, which now extends from *Finnegans Wake* to *True Confessions*. For those "high" artists surrounding the official court painter Joshua Reynolds, and for the "connoisseurs," so-

called, who admired the Italian schools exclusively, he could never restrain his contempt. There was, unmistakably, the bray of the true philistine horselaugh in the way he ridiculed these artists' claims to "divine inspiration" and to the indefinable quality — "*Je ne sais quoi*" — or Grace.

His own compositions were often cramped with detail and unbalanced; and his line was coarse, enclosing rather than revealing form, so that his pictures actually improve when they are reduced in size for publication. All his immense inventive genius was restricted by default to the depiction of a literary subject matter — caricatures of London daily life, both high and low, as seen from the inside.

Hogarth's successors and imitators gradually abandoned his moralistic tone as well as his hopeless battle with the "connoisseurs." His cartoon art was endowed to the daily newspaper rather than to the museum. The development of illustration and caricature by Rowlandson, Cruikshank, Gilray, Seymour and the rest coincided with the growth of modern journalism in Europe and America. By the time Outcalt's "Yellow Kid" appeared in the *New York World* in 1896 — generally considered the first of its kind — an embryo comic strip art was already gestating which, upon the consolidation of mass newspapers and syndicates by Pulitzer and

Hearst, emerged at last full-grown in the way we know.

THE REASON why comic strips have flourished here, and not at all in Europe, is a measure of the difference between the Old and New Worlds. European populations are largely homogeneous, their cultures rooted in traditional values; while in America, since the Civil War, the original and predominantly Anglo-Saxon society, with its cultural enclaves in New England and the South, began to break up under the impact of millions of immigrants of every nationality. Many of the earliest comics, such as "The Yellow Kid" himself, "Maggie and Jiggs," "The Katzenjammer Kids," "Abe Kabibble," etc., based their formulae on the efforts of immigrants to adjust to the new time and place. The fathers still retained many of their old-world habits, and some spoke with a vaudeville dialect; but their children made a complete break with the past. And the mass arts, with their immense democratic base, could serve to reconcile differences of class and caste, nationality and religion.

America has been recognized in Europe as representing a new ethos ever since Benjamin Franklin went abroad. For his many native qualities, but, especially, for having made a fetish of time, which is money, everyman's commodity, the stuff of life, Franklin was called the

First American. During his lifetime, of course, the main outlines of this ethos were still obscure. But by now the American fetishism of time has exposed itself through many nerves of anxiety — the obsessive dread of growing older without “having lived” (Rip Van Winkle), the dread of losing one’s youth or virility, the fear of missing one’s chance or “golden opportunity,” etc. It is no contradiction, however, that Progress is conceived to be as steady, irresistible, and cumulative a process as the ticking of a clock. The new *must* be better, for the same reason that the go-getter *must* come out ahead, or else something is radically wrong. The comic strip “Moon Mullins” provides a negative sort of testimony for this credo — Moon, a character in the old picaresque tradition, never does any work, sleeps too much, chases after women, wastes his money, and never thinks of tomorrow. But to balance Moon, at the other end of the evolutionary scale there is “Buck Rogers,” “Flash Gordon,” and, of course, “Superman,” Tarzan’s city-bred and more neurotic cousin who can hear a dripping faucet miles away.

THE CIRCULATION of comic books today is as fantastic, and yet accepted as casually, as a Buck Rogers’ flight to Mars — more than 18 billion each year! Their variety is prodigious, ranging from sexy and realistically drawn “confessions” to

animal fables, of which the newspapers only display a limited selection.

The hard-cover books of a previous generation, such as *Tom Swift*, *Bomba the Jungle Boy*, *Don Sturdy* and others, have been replaced by the comics, and few are read today. They belong to an era when kids used to cheer airplanes when they appeared and chase down the street to keep them in sight. Now a squadron of jets drones by and hardly stirs one of them to look up from his comic book. Can Tom Swift’s motorcycle be taken seriously against an atom-powered space ship?

Recently, however, such classic works of literature as *Crime and Punishment*, *Huckleberry Finn* and even the plays of Shakespeare have been translated into strip form. Only a small percentage of their readers would have been tempted by these books in the original, but their great popularity is not merely a desire for cultural “uplift.” More likely, the demand for comics is so great and incessant nowadays, that publishers have had to “lift” the classics for new material.

Enclosing Shakespeare’s characters in boxes, where, occasionally, his ectoplasmic words can issue from their mouths in balloons, does not make these comics any more high-brow than their peers. Of course, there are some strips, notably “Krazy Kat” in the twenties and “Li’l Abner” and “Pogo” today, which have been adopted by Ameri-

can intellectuals who never read any others. But these are often too sophisticated for the great audience which prefers its comics straight.

Europe, which has taken the stars of American movies into their own day dreams, and has even shown enthusiasm for jazz, has never adopted our comics. Our comic strips have a native quality which can't be exported, like the movies, to more traditionally rooted cultures. They resemble the cartoons in, say, *Punch*, as a wisecrack resembles an anecdote.

Even in America, the charge is often made against the comics that their overemphasis on sex and violence may have dangerous effects on the young. This may be so for those who already have criminal tendencies. "No girl was ever ruined by a book," said Mayor Walker. Fairy tales and myths of all times and all cultures have depicted evil beings who burn, baste, stew, boil, and disembowel their innocent little victims.

The age-level of those who follow the strips has steadily risen, until today the adult audience may be even greater than the juvenile. For workers who perform the same limited mechanical operations every day on the endless belt of an assembly line, the comics and the other mass arts are more congenial than traditional literature and painting. Their time is not the same. To a large extent, the career of these mass arts is bound

up with the future of American technology.

THE STRIP-TEASE-OF-TIME which the comics display is based on the clocklike rhythm of the machine rather than the organic changes of nature. For this reason, not only the comics, but the movies, jazz, radio and pulp serials, etc., which move to the same tempo, seem closer to artifacts than to art. Jazz, for example, from blues to bebop, must serve out its time constricted behind the thirty-two bars of the average record, although during a performance there is no limit to the number of new rides and choruses. As for the movies, the stars play their same selves in whatever roles they are cast. The conventions of the movies are so rigid that the continuum of feature to newsreel to double feature can be breached at any point by the audience, which arrives and departs in the same darkness. Finally, in soap opera and serialized pulp fiction, the device of the Strip Tease in Time is used to provide suspense and direction in a plot going nowhere.

But it is in the comics that this Strip reappears faithfully every day, and in the same way, immortal and grand, though we ourselves grow old and die. While the papers carry headlines of war, inflation, and atomic explosions, nothing can affect them in their inviolate boxes of purposeless energy. The ritual goes on and on, on a stage as wide as America.

BOOKS

William Phillips

Love As A Career

Rereading Colette

WHATEVER else might be said about this period in the future, it is a good bet that it will be known as the age of literary revival. In the last decade alone, there has been a Henry James boom, a Melville revival, a rediscovery of the twenties, and, generally, there has been a tendency to resurrect the heroes and moods of the past. The latest candidate for revival is Colette, the celebrated French writer, who once had a vogue in this country, but then was neglected for many years, until the publication recently of two volumes of her fiction.*

One can only speculate about the meaning of the revivalist spirit, which, incidentally, seems to be stronger in literature than in the other arts. Several different explanations have been advanced, none of

* *Gigi, Chance Acquaintances, Julie de Carneilhan*. By Colette. Farrar, Straus and Young. 315 pp. \$3.50.

Short Novels of Colette. Dial Press. 733 pp. \$5.00.

them entirely convincing, and some of them in contradiction with each other. It has been suggested that the revivals have been publishers' plots, which fails to explain why anybody else should have been taken in. Another theory is that the lack of contemporary talent has made it necessary to reclaim authors of the past, but many writers feel this theory is a disguised attack on modern literature. On the other hand, some people believe that each case of revival is unique and accidental — which is another way of saying that there is no explanation.

My own feeling is that, whatever truth there may be in any of the current theories, they all make the mistake of assuming that the phenomenon of revival is a new one. The fact is that it is an old one. Most of the Greek culture was at one time rediscovered, and figures like Dante, Shakespeare, Donne, among others, have been revived at

various times in literary history. What distinguishes the kind of revival we have today is that it is less organic than those of the past. Even so recently as the twenties, when T. S. Eliot stirred up a new interest in the poets of the seventeenth century, it was the change in poetic taste, with which Eliot, himself, had much to do, that made it possible to appreciate anew the work of the earlier writers. Today, however, it is hard to say that our literary reclamations grow purely out of our current ideas and tastes, especially since most of them have no visible relation to each other. I suspect that our connections with the literary past seem at times so haphazard, because we no longer have any unifying beliefs nor any central movement in the arts to shape our sense of an aesthetic and intellectual tradition.

IF OUR REVIVALS are not systematic, they are at least flexible, permitting us to embrace at the same time a writer as grave as James and one so charming and sophisticated as Colette. And I think the reading of Colette today might have a refreshing effect, as an antidote to the growing cult of solemnity that seems to place a special value on ponderous and boring fiction. Colette is probably one of the most entertaining of modern writers; yet her themes are serious and her writing shows all the pain and care of the scrupulous artist. Marcel Proust wrote her, after

reading one of her early novels, "I wept a little this evening, which I have not done for a long while." André Gide, a usually exacting critic, also wrote her an enthusiastic letter after finishing *Chéri*, an amusing but tragic story of a boy in love with an old courtesan. "Not one weakness," said Gide, "not one redundancy, nothing commonplace!" And Glenway Westcott, in a very discerning introduction to the recent collection of Colette's short novels, describes her as "the greatest living French writer."

Colette is a thoroughly French author, almost a national symbol, enjoying a popularity and esteem usually reserved for classic figures and cultural institutions. This is due primarily, of course, to the peculiar combination of quality and popular appeal in Colette's writing. But it also comes from the nature of her subject and her approach to it, both of which grow out of some of the most intimate aspects of French life. Most of her fiction revolves around the theme of love, in all its shapes and disguises: as a duty, a pleasure, a game, an institution, a moral and psychological force, and a way of life. In exploring the ramifications of love, always with a deft, almost courtly, touch, Colette treats it as one of the civilized arts and draws on the standard French myths about love. Like any other normal human activity love has its rules and conventions, and if below the surface of

Colette's fiction the fatal entanglements and conflicts grow in intensity, still, at eye level, her world of love is made up of amorous adventures that may be morally or psychologically destructive but in no way violate the canons of good social form. In *Chéri*, for instance, and *The Last of Chéri*, two of Colette's masterpieces, the aging courtesan, as well as the boy, is broken. Nevertheless, their perverse attraction to each other is not presented as something which, in itself — by definition, we might say — is monstrous. It is terrible for its consequences and its underlying motivations rather than for the kind of human relation it represents.

On the whole, Colette's fiction takes in the area between the casual love affair and the permanent bond, playing them off against each other both inside and outside the marital tie, and often confusing them. In one of her short novels, *The Other One*, these ambiguities are temporarily stabilized in a household containing an equal sexual and social partnership among a man, his wife, and his secretary. In other works, the contradictions break through and the characters fall apart. But, in either case, the world Colette writes about is one in which the male is assigned the role of the free-lance lover, while the female principle is a sensual and social prize, something a man wins if his masculinity is properly groomed, in keeping with the

prevailing fashions. The female, who holds the center of the stage at all times and dominates the scene with her desires and her calculations, is both a floating temptress and a permanent work of art, an aesthetic object in the flesh. The part she plays ranges all the way from the amateur to the professional, but in essence her career is love, whether as a wife or a mistress, or both, and she is symbolized by what the French call the *demimondaine*, the gracious companion who provides the illusion of respectability for the underground fling.

IN THE THREE short novels just published in one volume, Colette may be seen at her best and her most typical. All three novels are delightful and masterful stories of amorous difficulties, characteristically amusing and, at the same time, moving. In each of the novelettes, the main characters whirl around their feelings as they are caught in a crossfire of passion, duty, and ambition.

The first short novel, *Gigi*, is the best known, having been popularized as a movie; and, as a kind of Cinderella story in reverse, it has become part of our literary folklore. The heroine, a fatherless young girl, is coached incessantly by her mother, aunt, and grandmother, all adventurers by profession, in the art of using her feminine gifts to make her way in the world. But she is successful in the end, gaining both money

and love — two things her coaches saw no reason to combine — only because Gigi is too naïve to learn her worldly lessons. The story is effective because Colette does not squeeze its moral implications, but lets it ride mostly on its charm, its sharp, though good-natured wit, and on the irony of the conflict between love and a profitable attachment. After all, everyone concerned, Gigi, as well as the three aging schemers, does profit by the purity of Gigi's feelings.

The second novelette, *Julie de Carneilhan*, is essentially a triangle extended over two marriages. Julie, whose affections are negotiable, and her ex-husband, the Comte D'Espivant, who has left her to marry a wealthy woman, try to continue their former relation. At first their feelings as well as their meetings are sporadic. Finally, though, the Comte, sick and desperate, attempts to maneuver a settlement from his second wife in order to rejoin his first one. The breakdown of the situation is symbolized by the collapse of the Comte — Colette's women always seem to be the stronger — but, again, Colette characteristically plays off love and calculation against each other.

Chance Acquaintances, the third short novel, is a bright, playful comedy of manners, with an undertone of pathetic, if not tragic, frustration. Set in a health resort, it is a loosely but skillfully woven narra-

tive of crisscrossing lives and entanglements; and by telling it in the first person, Colette injects a note of absurdity into the way people get mixed up with each other, both intimately and casually. The main line of the story involves the machinations and the anxiety of a disintegrated business man, who had come to the resort with his ailing wife on what promised to be only a short stay for treatments, and who cannot bear the separation from his mistress in Paris, a full-time coquette who does not share his feelings. The result of all this is not too disastrous, though nothing is resolved. What follows is simply a guarantee that the *status quo* will be preserved, for the wife continues to be forgiving without understanding, the husband picks up where he left off, and the possibilities of further embroilment remain limitless.

I have tried to convey what is perhaps Colette's main distinction: the superb artistry with which she is able to tell a lively story. It may be that this is one of the reasons for her revival at present, since there have been many signs lately of a desire to bring the modern novel back to the narrative ease and excitement it had in earlier periods. In any case, if an author is being revived, it would not hurt to have her read. And I should like to see more of Colette's writing published in English — for those of us who did not have French governesses when we were children.

The Mission That Failed

Cocktails and Communists

***The Korea Story.* By John C. Caldwell. Regnery. 180 pp. \$3.00.**

It is still possible that Korea may some day have peace, and that Koreans may resume their work of building a free government on their own soil. In all likelihood the job of setting Korea on the road to economic stability and political security will again fall to the United States. It will be a harder job than it was before the war because of the terrible destruction visited on the Korean peninsula. But there will at least be a chance to profit from past mistakes. These mistakes in our attempt to set up a stable and secure Republic of Korea between 1945 and June 25, 1950, are vividly highlighted in *The Korea Story*.

No doubt the State Department's defenders will train their heavy artillery on this volume. The choice of title is unfortunate; the book is only part of the Korea story, and its attackers will say that the author generalizes too much on the basis of personal experience — which in some places is true. But if the State Department

might be persuaded to abandon what Arthur Krock calls its "doctrine of non-admission of error," it could learn some valuable lessons from Mr. Caldwell.

John C. Caldwell, who is the son of well-known missionaries to China, has spent most of his life in the Far East. He displays a warm sympathy for and understanding of the Korean people, combined with a moral dedication to freedom and a clear awareness of the vicious nature of the Communist enemy. The story begins with the author's arrival in Korea in January, 1948, and carries up to the fateful Sunday in June, 1950, when the Communist forces rolled south. He took part in the United States Army's information program, and helped to prepare for and supervise the elections of May 10, 1948. When the occupation ended in August, 1948, he worked with the State Department's Mission in Korea; he was able to observe United States operations in South Korea at first-hand.

The State Department is the chief target of *The Korea Story*. Although in many cases the pitiful ineptitude

which the author describes is the result of circumstances, inevitable bureaucratic bungling, a shortage of Americans trained in Korean ways, and indeed the American national character itself, there were more than enough inexcusable blunders to justify his criticism. One of these was the social snobbery and racial prejudice so frequently displayed by our representatives abroad. The American Mission staff kept to themselves; many showed an open dislike of Koreans; few ever bothered to break out of their circle of cocktail parties and rounds of the embassy bars. Drinking was a major problem in a land where abstinence or extreme moderation is the rule. "Reports of overindulgence finally seeped through to Washington, and an investigation started. The Foreign Service inspector assigned to an on-the-spot inspection spent several months in Seoul and was duly entertained. On one memorable occasion he passed out in the Ambassador's parlor. But he reported he saw no evidence of excessive drinking." A crowning irony was the capture intact by the North Koreans of \$40,000 worth of liquor, the embassy's July quota, when they moved into the Korean capital at the end of June.

The State Department's Information Service cuts a very sorry figure in Mr. Caldwell's book. Many of the more blatant errors he describes, such as failure to meet the specific

propaganda needs of individual areas, are being corrected; but there was ample reason for the author's description of the U.S.I.S. in Korea before the war as "The Voice That Failed." Important in this was the failure of any of the American representatives to leave what he accurately terms the "isolationism" of our embassy. Not one of the U.S.I.S.'s American staff was stationed outside of Seoul at the time of the invasion. The wranglings and antagonisms among the embassy proper, E.C.A., and U.S.I.S. made it next to impossible for Americans to tell the Koreans the really big story of our E.C.A. assistance. The American Mission was not a complete failure, however; the author mentions the names of many dedicated Americans who did a good job despite all the handicaps.

It is probable that political pressures in the summer of 1950 — a congressional election year — made the Administration change its mind and take a stand against Communism in Korea. Militarily and politically the Administration had prepared to follow Owen Lattimore's advice to "disembarrass itself as quickly as possible of its entanglements in South Korea." It is certain that had we not intervened, the Republic of South Korea would have collapsed rapidly. In such a case public opinion might once again have forced the State Department to issue a "White Paper" ex-

plaining why the Communists had, again, won.

We learn from *The Korea Story* that the ingredients of just such a "White Paper" lay ready to hand:

First of all, with regard to military aid, there were the bulletins, which went to every newspaper in South Korea. . . . In them we assured the people that America was, in fact, giving the Koreans immense military aid. We even listed over one hundred items of military equipment that had been delivered since the first of the year [1949]. We called attention to the Korean divisions our military advisors were training.

In point of fact, of the money appropriated by Congress, less than \$20,000 worth of materials had been delivered by the time of the invasion. There were, it is true, a large number of items of equipment, but these consisted of telephone wire, field phones, etc. The real sinews of war were not delivered, but in our publicity we implied that it had been.

Then there were the reports and statements of important military men. "General William Roberts was quoted as saying that the South Koreans had 'the best damn army outside the United States'"; other military "experts" had given the Communists future propaganda weapons by such statements as "the South Korean Army had reached such a high pitch of training and arming that an attack on the North

was more to be feared than one from the North."

To this could have been added all the material gathered in the Seoul cocktail bars about government corruption in the outlying provinces. There was much gossip about the autocratic and unpopular nature of Dr. Rhee's government, and charges of election frauds. "Nothing," states Mr. Caldwell with regard to this last charge, "could be further from the truth." Then there was the fact that in the first few days of the war many of the South Koreans were forced to surrender en masse to the invaders later to fight in the Communist armies. All the elements were present for explaining away the collapse of South Korea in terms of military inefficiency, dictatorship, unpopular government, etc. Fortunately we did take a stand in Korea, and there has been no "White Paper" seeking to palliate ineptitude, sloth, and negligence.

The Korea Story is a personal one and may seem unduly bitter in tone. But this reviewer can state, on the basis of personal observation in the Far East this summer, that with the exception of a few bright spots like Hong Kong, Mr. Caldwell's criticism of our State Department's Korean operation is still in large measure a valid criticism of our operations in Asia today.

RICHARD L. WALKER

From Washington to Moscow

The Lend-Lease Story

From Major Jordan's Diaries.

Harcourt, Brace. 284 pp. \$3.50.

MAJOR GEORGE RACEY JORDAN'S book, entitled *From Major Jordan's Diaries*, furnishes further evidence of what is now generally accepted by the American people as a fact — that our leadership during World War II was gullible and stupid in its relations with the Soviet Union. To this extent it is a valuable document and deserves a wide readership. However, the subtitle of Major Jordan's book indicates that it is "the inside story of Soviet Lend-Lease from Washington to Great Falls to Moscow." It is with regard to this "inside story" that I find the book disappointing.

When we look back, it seems incredible that we should have been taken in so completely by Stalin and his lieutenants. Just as Hitler had announced in advance his objectives and the means of reaching them in his *Mein Kampf*, so Marx, Lenin, and Stalin had set forth theirs in writings covering many decades. With the example before us of Hitler's carrying out his base designs,

we might have been at least suspicious that the Russian dictator would ultimately carry out his.

I think that Major Jordan puts his finger on the nerve of the matter when he quotes a conversation between President Roosevelt and William C. Bullitt. The latter had protested against too great reliance on Stalin; the President replied that he did not dispute Mr. Bullitt's facts or logic, but he just had a "hunch" that Stalin wanted nothing but security for his country. Roosevelt credited Harry Hopkins with the same opinion, and added that if we were generous with Stalin during the war Stalin would work with us for peace and democracy.

There can be no doubt that the attitude of the President was reflected throughout the government, and there can be no doubt that his confidante, Harry Hopkins, encouraged the President in this attitude. Major Jordan accounts in great detail, and I am sure with reasonable accuracy, for the Lend-Lease aid given the Soviet Union. On the other hand, I think that much too much of the book is dedicated to

building a case against Harry Hopkins, with the implication that he acted against the interests of the United States in his efforts to further the interests of the Soviet Union. I knew Harry Hopkins quite well during the war and am convinced that he was a great patriot. As Secretary of the General Staff, I saw General Marshall call on Harry Hopkins time and again to urge some action or other on the President which General Marshall thought was necessary to the prosecution of the war. General Marshall, I am sure, felt that he could always rely on Hopkins' aid. Later, when I was head of the United States Military Mission in Moscow, I had long discussions with Hopkins and our Ambassador, Averell Harriman, as to how the United States position could best be advanced in meetings between Hopkins and Stalin.

Major Jordan quotes me as stating that "with respect to Russian aid, I always felt that Hopkins carried out his mission with a zeal which approached fanaticism." I did write that, and I believe it. In his efforts to support the Soviet war effort I am convinced, as Major Jordan apparently is, that Hopkins went too far both as to priorities and in interpreting the Lend-Lease law. As a result, American interests suffered and Soviet interests gained. However, I am equally convinced that Hopkins' obsession was an honest one and should in no way be

construed as unpatriotic or disloyal.

Major Jordan emphasizes particularly that Hopkins was instrumental in helping the Soviet Union obtain material and information needed in the development of the atom bomb. He also stresses the postwar value of so much of the Lend-Lease equipment that was sent to the Soviet Union with Hopkins' approval.

It is very probable that material was sent to the Soviet Union that was helpful to it in the development of the atom bomb. To a large extent this was unavoidable because of the secrecy that of necessity surrounded our Manhattan Project; because of legitimate wartime uses which Russia could make of some such materials other than in atomic energy development; and, finally, because refusal to send such material might have pointed too sharply to our own efforts in the atomic field. Indeed, in one case Major Jordan states that General Groves, wartime head of our atomic energy development, approved a shipment because he felt that disapproval would have jeopardized the secrecy of our own activities. I am sure that no one in the Lend-Lease administration or on the Russian Protocol Committee, other than Harry Hopkins, knew of our atomic research. It is not surprising therefore that in the ordinary course of Lend-Lease administration items of possible application to atomic development were sent on to Russia.

As for the materials sent to Russia

that had postwar value, Major Jordan is right in saying that far too much was sent. Particularly was this true after the end of the war was in sight — and it was late in the war that the Soviet Union sought most of such materials. Such items as oil-producing machinery, port facilities, locomotives, and machine tools were sent to the Soviet Union when it was fairly obvious that they could not be installed and used before the end of the war. If such stupidity on our part is excusable at all, it is only on the grounds that it was difficult to say that any item, in Russian

hands, might not conceivably contribute to the war effort, and it was impossible to foresee exactly when the war would end.

To repeat, then, I believe that Major Jordan has given a reasonably accurate description of the magnitude and character of our Lend-Lease aid to Russia. I differ with him only with respect to the implications the book leaves with me concerning those responsible for the Lend-Lease administration and, particularly, Harry Hopkins.

JOHN R. DEANE,
MAJOR GENERAL, U.S.A., RET.

Engels on Russian Diplomacy (1890)

» The only wars which can suit [the] purpose [of the Russian diplomats] are those in which Russia's allies bear the brunt of the burden, sacrifice their territory to the devastation of the battlefield, provide the great bulk of the fighting men — wars in which Russian troops, assigned the role of reserves, are spared from most engagements, but to whom in all great battles the honor of the final decision is reserved with relatively slight sacrifices entailed. . . . However a war under such favorable circumstances is not always to be had, and therefore Russian diplomacy prefers to utilize, for its own ends, the conflicting interests and greediness of the other powers, to set these powers against each other and exploit these enmities to the advantage of the Russian policy of conquest.

FRIEDRICH ENGELS, *quoted in* THE RUSSIAN MENACE
TO EUROPE, *The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1952.*

BOOKS IN SHORT

Female Falstaff

Talullah. By Talullah Bankhead.
Harper. 335 pp. \$3.95.

ALONG WITH a strong yearning to play Shakespeare at some point in their careers, the queens of the theater seem to share an urge to put their thoughts between book covers. The late Gertrude Lawrence, Eva Le Gallienne, Katherine Cornell, and Helen Hayes are just a few of the more notable actresses turned authors. This illustrious sorority is now joined by unquestionably the rowdiest, most energetic and publicized of the lot — Talullah Bankhead.

The book's blurb writer relates that Miss Bankhead has at last "been persuaded to tell the whole story"; but the actress tempers this statement by declaring that "no actor can resist a bid to purge himself publicly," and that only her youth held her literary talents in check (she had intended waiting until seventy). Of course, it isn't quite the *whole* story. "I've told as much of the truth as I dare, without winning the frown of the Postmaster General. In the interests of good taste I've not blueprinted my delinquencies. I've ducked the truth when it would injure others."

One of the confessed motives for the book being written was to il-

luminare the legend that has grown up around her name. Thus are brought forth for exhaustive review the various canards made about the lady, which, in the reading, seem to have been invented by herself to shock the yokels. Yes, says she, she drinks, but swears that she never missed a performance because of it. No, she does not take dope, but once tried it on a bet. Yes, she is a lady of romantic dalliance. No, this; yes, that — and so on. She claims a good share of the responsibility for building the legend of moral waywardness that has established her as the theater's No. 1 Hellion. For the reader the question inevitably arises: But who cares?

Over the years Talullah may not have always indicated by her self-confessed actions that she knew right from wrong, but she leaves no doubt as to where her affections lie. Her characterizations of her enemies, real or imaginary, are succinct: The Governor of New York is dismissed with "I'd be suspicious of Thomas E. Dewey if he was chairman of the Democratic National Convention." Of playwright Lillian Hellman she notes: "I could never rejoice in her company." Of the late Alexander Woollcott: "He was vindictive, shockingly petty in a feminine fashion, given to excesses when express-

ing his preferences or prejudices. He probably endorsed more second-rate books than any man of his time."

It goes without saying that although she gives no quarter to the enemy, she is lavish toward friends and pet institutions. High on the list, right or wrong, are the New York Giants, the Democratic Party, Beatrice Lillie, Ethel Barrymore, Louis Armstrong, and a host of others. Miss Bankhead is absolutely fair when she says that in her likes and dislikes "she has never succumbed to the chill demands of logic."

Talullah is successful as an extended piece of talk, thanks mainly to the overslick treatment given the subject by an extremely competent ghost writer. This gentleman deserves a special publisher's medal for heroic action on what must have been a battlefield of conversational confusion. He has succeeded in rendering that fast, frenetic, and vaguely disenchanted humor which is the Bankhead trademark.

The best section of the autobiography concerns her London success of the twenties. Through the reminiscences of this time she emerges as one of Fitzgerald's "beautiful and damned" heroines — gilded, a little sad, and sympathetic in spite of all her damnfoolishness. But the overall portrait is that of a once beautiful femme fatale now turned female Sir John Falstaff. She is noisy, spoiled, impatient, generous, athirst for success, intelligent, and hardheaded. It

is no modern Griselda who writes that "the man doesn't live who can bludgeon me into a contract, a circumstance or a settlement at odds with my creed."

JACQUELINE CLARK

The Local Ground

The Build-up. By William Carlos Williams. Random House. 335 pp. \$3.50.

THE SUDDEN and unexpected interest in the work of this avant-garde writer, who for years had to publish his own poetry, is another indication of the American intellectual's recent discovery of his country. For of the three most highly touted American poets of the last twenty years — T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams — Williams was the only one to stay to work the local ground. A bit of a crank, he was thought, with his insistence on America, American speech, American history.

Of course, poets tackled American themes. Hart Crane rhymed the Brooklyn Bridge, but in Elizabethan language and rhythm. Crane could give an East Side slum Elizabethan color. Williams, however, insisted that a new country demanded new forms, that England wasn't America. Besides, he wasn't interested in the heroic. The glitter and shine of America didn't interest him as much as suburban details, local speech,

city streets: "There is small holiness to be found in braver things."

Today, an old master, published by a big house, widely reviewed, Williams hasn't changed his aims or methods. From the early poems to his last long work, *Paterson*, from *In the American Grain* to the latest novel, *The Build-up*, the work is all of a piece. In an age dominated by the public relations mind, the advertising man's ethic, men like Cummings and Williams are rare in their ornery refusal to knuckle under.

But the chief reason for Williams' recent success is the change in climate among the intellectuals. In Williams you get a sense of the real details of American life. And the American intellectual today, for the first time, begins to realize how out of touch he is, how little he knows about the ordinary facts of American existence.

Williams' new novel, *The Build-up*, is a prose counterpart to his long poem, *Paterson*; like that poem it deals with suburban New Jersey, its people, mainly its women. The novel is the history of an immigrant family, the Stechers, during the years preceding World War I. That period now seems to us the golden years, the years of real peace, and Williams' novel is shot through with the satisfactions of American life. The events are not special: the family on the move from city to suburb, from the wrong side of town

to the right side, finally arriving at a large country home of their own. Joe Stecher, a quiet German printer, is surrounded by his two daughters, his wife Gurlie, and her Norwegian family. Gurlie is the engine. Her energy and good works win for Joe and the family the local prominence that can alone satisfy her. The best writing in the novel deals with the childhood of the two daughters, Lottie and Flossie. Lottie has her father's poetic intelligence, Flossie her mother's right, clear sense of the world. Together, dark and light, they make a gentle pattern. The novel then is no major effort. But it is distinguished by clarity of writing and rightness of detail.

In the text books Williams is often called an Imagist, which is false, for Williams neither in prose nor verse gives you a static image. His talent, like Hemingway's, is for communicating action, even the action of the mind. And like Hemingway, his prose style has a disarming informality, the result of successful improvisation. For example: "The world was indeed a sad place from which it would be best to resign. The seasons were like the sea that kept beating upon a shore, now it was ice-clogged, unpeopled, but presently the sun would come back again, a pleasant surf would race in childlike and fall with a burst of laughter, white flowers — a tumble. Flossie was expecting her second child."

HARVEY SHAPIRO

Sane Middle Course

American Education and Religion: The Problem of Religion in the Schools. Ed. by F. Ernest Johnson. Published by the Institute of Religious and Social Studies. Harper. 211 pp. \$2.00.

THE PAST FEW YEARS have seen a spate of books on American education come from the presses. Most of them are full of the cant of this or that orthodoxy, damning each other with half truths and half lies. *American Education and Religion*, a symposium edited by F. Ernest Johnson, D.D., Professor Emeritus of Education at Columbia's Teachers College, is a welcome relief from this torrent of embattled and unoriginal immoderatism.

The meat of the book is in Dr. Johnson's "Summary and Conclusions." Here he charts a sane and conservative middle course for American public schools to follow in the perplexing matter of the teaching of religion. What he has to say will not please diehard "anticlericals" up in arms at even the slightest pedagogic acknowledgment of the traditional religious convictions which students bring into the schools with them; certainly, it will not be to the taste of those who, like the unspeakable Allen Zoll and his "National Council of American Education," would impose a benighted conformity on the schools.

Dr. Johnson argues that increased

religious instruction is not only practicable, but has the sanction of the Constitution. He thinks that American public education will suffer if it ignores traditional religious values. The book which he has ably edited is an example of the authentic religious spirit working in the field of public education. M. G.

Hunting Hemingway

Hemingway: The Writer As Artist. By Carlos Baker. Princeton. 322 pp. \$4.50.

I CAN'T think of anyone who needs this book less than Hemingway. Not that it isn't useful. In the back there is a list of Hemingway's complete works in various editions. But, really, something should be done to check such unnecessary effusions. Perhaps the inner check — is this book really necessary?

If there's a transparent writer around who is a good writer and yet neither recondite, abstrusely allusive, or "difficult," it's Ernest Hemingway. Probably the best of our popular novelists, with all his faults, alternating between toughness and sentimentality so adroitly that they often come to the same thing at the same time, Hemingway needs this exegetical study like the well-known hole in the head.

A reading of Professor Baker's book, and you are liable never to go to the Master's novels and short

stories again. Ernest Hemingway looks pretty naked with his mythical underpinning exposed, his synecdoches counted, his Homeric parallels noted, his imagery of mountain and plain, his use of the *nada* theme, etc., etc., discussed, tabulated and neatly tucked away.

A book like this can even lead to a positive dislike for literature. It has been remarked, many times, that the modern compulsion to rip into works of art, slice up the cold carrion, and set down the strips in neat parallels probably holds within it a genteel hatred.

It's as if the mind that lacks the synthetic building qualities of an artist must kill this natural thing. Bullets are analyses, and these in turn "master" the work by riddling it, filling it full of holes, stopping it dead in its tracks, and then saying: "Guess what?"

Professor Baker, writing the first "full length portrait of Hemingway as artist, stylist and craftsman," assisted by correspondence and connivance from Hemingway himself, has stalked his man well. The temptation to be quarry must have broken down even Hemingway's usual reserve.

The hunt begins with the mortar burst that struck Hemingway in 1918, when he was fighting in the Italian Army, with "the force of revelation," teaching him what Professor Baker does not care to stress: the odd voluptuous beauty of vio-

lence. From this promising beginning, we make a weary trek through the "moral criticism" of the novels and short stories, and end up with a neat testimonial to the slaughtered artist's manhood:

Here is nature and here is a man.
Here also is something about the
nature of manhood.

Perhaps Hemingway's special value as an artist can be glimpsed (after the mortar burst) in this quotation from chapter XLII of *Moby Dick*:

Tell me, why this strong young colt, foaled in some peaceful valley of Vermont, far removed from all beasts of prey — why is it that upon the sunniest day, if you but shake a fresh buffalo robe behind him, so that he cannot even see it, but only smells its wild animal muskiness — why will he start, snort, and with bursting eyes paw the ground in phrensies of affright? There is no remembrance in him of any gorings of wild creatures. . . . No; but even here thou beholdest, in a dumb brute, the instinct of the knowledge of the demonism in the world. . . . Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fight.

There is no other way we can understand Hemingway's "morbid" attraction to violence — if we have to understand it — than through a voluntary submission to such a metaphor.

Then it might appear that Hem-

ingway's interest in the bull ring, in violence and courage, is admirable precisely because it is held against the modern rational and enlightened spoofing of all that medieval stuff; and that it is feminine in its intuitive appreciation of formal and ritualistic courage in the face of a felt all-prevalent "demonism in the world." And this no matter how much verbiage is spilled about the justice of this thing or that. It is this feeling in Hemingway that gives a cleanliness and shine to the work.

Hemingway, however, is not quite as wild and dangerous as he appears. Edmund Wilson remarked that he has a "suspicious" resemblance to Clark Gable; and it is true that he has plotted more than one novel with an eye on Hollywood. That is why this full-length study strikes an absurd note — from the grinding seriousness of it, you would expect that the chase had such a beast as Pound, Eliot, Rilke, or Valéry in view.

NEIL WEISS

Roving Conscience

Off the Record. Doubleday. 324 pp. \$3.95.

"FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS," a disgruntled Quai d'Orsay official once said, "are like a roving conscience unleashed upon the world."

Indeed, since Xenophon started the tradition of reporting on things and events far away, foreign cor-

respondents have gone to the ends of the earth to point their finger at rascals, tyrants, and dictators. They have, in their own way, tried to maintain the ideals of truth and justice. And they have been maligned for doing so.

When William Shirer, G. E. R. Gedye, H. R. Knickerbocker, and John Gunther reported on the Nazi danger, their warnings were shrugged off. After all, didn't British Ambassador Sir Neville Henderson say that Hitler was a peace-loving, misunderstood man? A swarm of greasy pitchmen and desperate fanatics raced from their holes to welcome Hitler as the savior of the race and defender of civilization against the Asiatic hordes.

Foreign correspondents who went to Soviet Russia — men like Eugene Lyons and William Henry Chamberlin — shouted themselves hoarse to make the truth about Communism known.

Today, most foreign correspondents are perhaps a bit more cautious and apprehensive. They remember such colleagues as William Oatis, buried in a Communist dungeon; Clarke, kicked out of Iran for telling the truth about Mossadegh; Sidney Wise, thrown out of Spain; Ray Josephs, barred from Argentina for showing "disrespect" to Peron. They live in fear of becoming *personae non gratae*. For a foreign correspondent without a foreign country to go to is really in a fix.

The authors gathered together in *Off the Record*, a book sponsored by the *Overseas Press Club*, have turned their typewriters on each other for a change and have produced a candid and often amusing picture of foreign correspondents at work. They have written about themselves in search of that one big first story, and anyone interested in the ways of foreign correspondents will certainly find something in the long list of contributors that will merit his attention.

In an age of government hand-outs, manipulated opinion, and censorship, it is pleasant to be reminded how it was in the "good old days," when foreign correspondents disguised themselves as waiters, swan-herds, or potted palms — and got their story. S. F.

Front Line City

The Berlin Story. By Curt Riess. Dial Press. 368 pp. \$3.75.

A former Berliner himself, Curt Riess went back in 1945 as an American correspondent. He has now come up with a book that purports to tell the long overdue *Berlin Story*. But, unfortunately, Mr. Riess has confined himself to surface appearances. His book, a succession of anecdotes and personal experiences (partly supplied by his German collaborators), misses out on a crucial point. It does not explore the po-

litical significance or the unique spiritual situation of Germany's battered and bruised former capital. Indeed, Mr. Riess refrains from evaluating anything at all. In his sympathetic and readable report he talks about the Soviet rape of the city, the dark and cold postwar winters, the blockade, and the final split of the City into East and West. He portrays the human side of a divided city of four million, with two administrations, two police forces, and two currencies. And he gives us a few (sometimes rather questionable) inside glimpses of the Kremlin's camp. But he never gets to the heart of the matter.

For Berlin, obviously, is more than a political curiosity or — according to Mr. Riess — a provincialized metropolis fighting off slow death. Joined to the West by nothing more than a one-hundred-mile stretch of Soviet-controlled highway, three arbitrary air corridors, and a few railroad tracks, Berlin was the first spot where Communist aggression was stopped. Stopped by two million people who staked their everything on a West that was willing to make a stand. It was the first and only place in Germany where the spirit of Western co-operation was solidly rooted in the convictions of ordinary men. And it is the only spot in Germany today where the Nazis, new and old, have not made any headway at all. G. Sr.

Down

to

Earth



Alan Devoe

NOW IN

DECEMBER

IT HAS BEEN SAID a great many times that the best preservative for us human beings is to have some lasting interest outside ourselves. It has been said a great many times that life is brief, that we come from clay, and that we return thereto. It has been said a great many times that there are no pockets in shrouds, you can't take it with you, and the best things in life are free.

Put things this way, and they are platitudes. Dress them up in new words, re-present them sideways as coming from a new Pakistan philosopher, and they are good for a lecture tour of eighty-nine stops, including Manitowoc, Wis., and all the creamed chicken the philosopher can eat. Stand them on their heads to make paradoxes and they will pass for high cleverness. Extend them somewhat with allusions to Fifty-fifth Isaiah and Malachi Three, and there is no reason why they should not provide a long and honor-

able clerical career terminating as prebendary of the Cathedral. Say them over and over and over again, just as they are, and it is almost inescapable in time to become an Elder Statesman.

In short, there is no new wisdom. There is nothing but very old wisdom indeed, dating back to perhaps 10 A.M. of that magical First Day of Adam's which he is understood, by forgetting so promptly the evident truths vouchsafed to him, to have turned in a dreadful sense into something of a last day too. There is nothing new to be said, and there hasn't been since the invention of speech. Had we all remained dumb, we could just have spent our time looking thoughtfully at one another, nodding our heads in affirmation of the common truths we all know, shaking our heads gloomily in regret over our common and inveterate forgetting of these truths, and we could have uttered in these silent gestures everything of any

importance in all the groaning shelves-full of the volumes of philosophy. In a sense, every time a writer sits down at his typewriter to say something, he is made aware, unless he is a man of staggering simplicity and self-complacence, that all he is going to be able to write, really, are ditto marks.

This realization must afflict and somewhat tend to paralyze all writers; but it comes particularly to the writer who regularly writes a column, or the writer who regularly writes in one particular field of letters. Upon the writer laboring under both these terms, it can descend with such compelling force as almost to silence him.

Suppose you are a literary critic. You write your first book review, and then your tenth, and after a while your hundredth, and in time your thousandth and ten-thousandth. In your tenth review — very likely in your first one — you said certain sound things and laid out a certain schema of critical values. For your hundredth review, you realize, however different your words may be, what you are doing is saying the same things again and restating in a different way the same principles of criticism. This is likewise what you are doing in your thousandth review, and also in your ten-thousandth (by which time you are known as the Dean of American Critics, and your annual volume of Collected Criticisms falls from the

presses as dependably as the withering grapes from the autumn vine). All the while, review by review by review, there deepens your awareness that everything of any consequence in the critical field had already been unimprovably said anyway by the year 1608; and there deepens your sense that it is not only pointless but fatuous to be enunciating all over again, in new words, what is after all only a thinly disguised version of the fundamental philosophical insight perfectly expressed by Lao-tzu in the sixth century B.C.; and there seizes you a nearly overpowering desire never to see another book as long as you live and to become an itinerant cat's-meat vendor in Port Said. It comforts you none to look upon the long majestic row of your Works upon the shelf, for you see the whole row, with a dreadful insight, under its right title. Its title is *Ditto*.

IT is bad enough, thus, when you are a writer in one field of letters particularly. Still, you have one saving device. Though you must perforce repeat yourself — we *all* repeat ourselves, inescapably, over and over and over, in one collective racial murmur of repetition, from the morning of the world — you can to some extent hide this fact from yourself by virtue of scattering what you say through a broad variety of periodicals. If you review *Neo-Marxian Trends in Contem-*

porary Poetry for Obliquity: A Journal of the New Spirit, and then review *Murder in Step-ins* for *Bang!*, the digest's digest, you can hope to achieve at least a partial success in concealing both from your readers and yourself the fact that the two reviews are in a profound sense the same review, and that both of them in a profounder sense are the review you wrote of *Coolidge the Man* in 1924, and that in the profoundest sense of all there is no truth uttered in either review which was not already uttered, with definitive excellence, by some man who did tablet-chipping for Rameses the Third. You cannot entirely conceal this knowledge, but you can partially do so; and it is a comfort.

But suppose, now, that you not only do your writing mostly in one particular field — say, nature — but that you write regularly under a particular title — “Down to Earth,” it might be — in a particular magazine, bearing the name, for instance, *THE AMERICAN MERCURY*. Suppose that every thirty days for a year, and then for five years, and then for a decade, and then on into the next decade, under a succession of five editors, you must persuade yourself that you have something to say which you have not already said and which indeed was not already said superbly by someone else long before you were able to hold a rattle. You must so persuade yourself or stop writing. By a titanic gesture

of self-persuasion, once a month, you must manage to believe that what you propose to say is novel. You must persuade yourself that what you write this month — this biography of a chipmunk, this study of the natural history of swamps, this investigation of weasels, this ruminative piece of ecology — is worth doing, even though you can see with clarity that it is only, as all expression is, a re-presentation.

It is difficult. Every now and then, it is impossible. And it is impossible now.

THIS ISSUE of the *MERCURY* is to bear the date of the month of Christmas. This should mean, for the writer of “Down to Earth,” the composing of a “Christmas piece.” There rise to mind the ghosts of Christmases Past . . . an article on Christmas birds, an article on the natural history of Christmas as a festival, an article on how animals spend the Christmas season outdoors, an article on praise and gratitude as natural down-to-earth virtues which can make all seasons of the circling year a kind of Christmas time, an article . . . But enough. There are all sorts of Christmas pieces for a naturalist to write. Anything will furnish a foundation for one. Holly; mistletoe; evergreens; reindeer; snowflakes. There is nothing ever to stop the flow of The Christmas Article. Except one thing; and if this rises up in a fullness of

realization, as it has this year, it can do it. It is just this:

"Christmas" — the single word itself, naked, plain — has said everything there is to be said about itself.

It is not just that "writing about Christmas," now, would probably be only a change-ringing repetition of other writings about Christmas, other years. Repetition is the common lot of all of us. We can all say only old things in new ways or keep silence. This is something much more tremendous.

What sort of silly-pathetic effrontery would it be to write now, say, an article about the chickadees and juncos in the snow-whitened Christmas woods, composing this carefully to bring out the fact that there is a kind of holiness about the earth and that it is lit with wonder? The clear fact, short and vigorous as a blow, is that the one word "Christmas" has already said all this. Write the single word "Christmas" and you have expressed, in the two syllables, an entire religious view, an earth-view, a cosmology. You have commented on what juncos and chickadees and the balsam-scented air ought to mean to us, you have conjured a whole dramatic story about animals kneeling in a stable, you have said a bookful of that ecological wisdom (which ecologists reach only the long-way-around)

that holds that all created things have their "niches" in the architecture of the made world. What sort of preposterous pretension would it be to write an article, now, to say that even common earth has its glory? The one word "Christmas" already says, in one stupendous shout, that the whole essence and meaning of this season — whether as Christians we take the matter literally, or as non-Christians take it symbolically — is that this earth's common clay, its dust, its homely flesh, is divinely indwelt. What imaginable newness or pretense of newness could lie now in an article about how vegetations die down to a sleep in seeds and then wake to flowering, or how a woodchuck undergoes the little death of hibernation to reach the new life of next spring? The last drop of meaning-extract to be wrung from this is already caught in distillate in one word, Christmas.

THIS MONTH it is impossible to pretend to be saying any new thing, or to be able to say an old one in new words. The old thing is the unimprovably precious thing; the old words are the unimprovably briefest and best. I give them to you as the only writing worth writing this month:

Merry Christmas.

PAST AND PRESENT

George Jean Nathan & H. L. Mencken

Clinical Notes

Leafing through the pages of Mencken's MERCURY, you think: How long ago it seems! Prohibition, Comstockery, Babbitry, and the rest — all those old swineries — how dead they are! They are — and then they aren't. For the poor in spirit are always with us. The punches that Mencken and his gang let fly in the past still find a mark in the present. Many old MERCURY pieces cry for reprinting. Which is what this department will do.

Dead Cats

OF A PIECE with the absurd pedagogical demand for so-called constructive criticism is the doctrine that an iconoclast is a hollow and evil fellow unless he can prove his case. Why, indeed, should he prove it? Is he judge, jury, prosecuting officer, hangman? He proves enough, indeed, when he proves by his blasphemy that this or that idol is defectively convincing — that at least *one* visitor to the shrine is left full of doubts. The fact is enormously significant; it indicates that instinct has somehow risen superior to the shallowness of logic, the refuge of fools. The pedant and the priest have always been the most expert of logicians — and the most diligent

disseminators of nonsense and worse. The liberation of the human mind has never been furthered by such learned dunderheads; it has been furthered by gay fellows who heaved dead cats into sanctuaries and then went roistering down the highways of the world, proving to all men that doubt, after all, was safe — that the god in the sanctuary was finite in his power, and hence a fraud. One horse-laugh is worth ten thousand syllogisms. It is not only more effective; it is also vastly more intelligent. (January, 1924)

Story Without a Moral

A NUMBER of years ago, in my newspaper days, I received from what would now be called the Ku

Klux Klan a circular violently denouncing the Catholic Church. This circular stated that the Church was engaged in a hellish conspiracy to seize the government of the United States and put an agent of the Pope into the White House, and that the leaders of the plot were certain Jesuits, all of them foreigners and violent enemies of the American Constitution. Only one such Jesuit was actually named: a certain Walter Drum, S. J. He was denounced with great bitterness, and every true American was besought to be on the watch for him. Something inspired me to turn to *Who's Who in America*; it lists all the principal emissaries of Rome in the Republic, even when they are not Americans. This is what I found:

Drum, Walter, S. J.; b. at Louisville, Ky., Sept. 21, 1870; s. Capt. John Drum, U.S.A., killed before Santiago.

I printed the circular of the Ur-Klansmen — and that eloquent sentence from *Who's Who*. No more was heard against the foreigner Drum in that diocese. . . .

Eight or ten years later, having retired from journalism with a competence, I was the co-editor of a popular magazine. One day there reached me the manuscript of a short story by a young Princeton man, by name F. Scott Fitzgerald. It was a harmless and charming story about a young scholastic in a Jesuit seminary. A few months later it was printed in the magazine. Four

days after the number was on the stands I received a letter from a Catholic priest, denouncing me as an enemy to the Church, belaboring the story as blasphemous and worse, and stating that the writer proposed to make a tour of all the Catholic women's clubs in the East, urging their members to blacklist and boycott the magazine. The name signed to the letter was "Walter Drum, S.J."

I offer the story, but append no moral. Perhaps its only use is to show how Christians of both wings have improved upon John XV, 12. (January, 1924)

Portrait of an Ideal World

THAT ETHYL ALCOHOL in dilute aqueous solution, when taken into the human organism, acts as a depressant, not as a stimulant, is now so much a commonplace of knowledge that even the more advanced varieties of physiologists are beginning to be aware of it. The intelligent layman no longer resorts to the jug when he has important business before him, whether intellectual or manual; he resorts to it after his business is done, and he desires to release his taut nerves and reduce the boiler-pressure in his spleen. Alcohol, so to speak, unwinds us. It raises the threshold of sensation and makes us less sensitive to external stimuli, and particularly to those that are unpleasant. It reduces and simplifies the emotions. Putting

a brake upon all the qualities which enable us to get on in the world and shine before our fellows — for example, combativeness, shrewdness, diligence, ambition — it releases the qualities which mellow us and make our fellows love us — for example, amiability, generosity, toleration, humor, sympathy. A man who has taken aboard two or three cocktails is less competent than he was before to steer a battleship down the Ambrose Channel, or to cut off a leg, or to draw up a deed of trust, or to conduct Bach's B-minor mass, but he is immensely more competent to entertain a dinner party, or to admire a pretty girl, or to subscribe to the Near East Relief, or to *hear* Bach's B-minor mass. The harsh, useful things of the world, from pulling teeth to digging potatoes, are best done by men who are as starkly sober as so many convicts in the deathhouse, but the lovely and useless things, the charming and exhilarating things, are best done by men with, as the phrase is, a few sheets in the wind. *Pithecanthropus erectus* was a teetotaler, but the angels, you may be sure, know what is proper at 5 P.M.

All this is so obvious that I marvel that no utopian has ever proposed to get rid of all the sorrows of the world by the simple device of getting and keeping the whole human race gently stewed. I do not say drunk, remember; I say simply gently stewed — and apologize, as in duty

bound, for not knowing how to describe the state in a more seemly phrase. The man who is in it is a man who has put all of his best qualities into his showcase. He is not only immensely more amiable than the cold sober man; he is also immeasurably more decent. He reacts to all situations in an expansive, generous and humane manner. He has become more liberal, more tolerant, more kind. He is a better citizen, husband, father, friend. The enterprises that make human life on this earth uncomfortable and unsafe are never launched by such men. They are not makers of wars; they do not rob and oppress anyone; they invent no such swineries as high tariffs, 100 per cent Americanism, Methodism and Prohibition. All the great villainies of history, from the murder of Abel to the Treaty of Versailles, have been perpetrated by sober men, and chiefly by teetotalers. But all the charming and beautiful things, from the Song of Songs to terrapin à la Maryland, and from the nine Beethoven symphonies to the Martini cocktail, have been given to humanity by men who, when the hour came, turned from well water to something with color to it, and more in it than mere oxygen and hydrogen.

I am well aware, of course, that getting the whole human race stewed and keeping it stewed, year in and year out, would present formidable technical difficulties. It

would be hard to make the daily dose of each individual conform exactly to his private needs, and hard to get it to him at precisely the right time. On the one hand there would be the constant danger that large minorities might occasionally become cold sober, and so start wars, theological disputes, moral reforms, and other such unpleasantness. On the other hand, there would be danger that other minorities might proceed to actual intoxication, and so annoy us all with their fatuous bawling or maudlin tears. But such technical obstacles, of course, are by no means insurmountable. Perhaps they might be got around by abandoning the administration of alcohol *per ora* and distributing it instead by impregnating the air with it. I throw out the suggestion, and pass on. Such questions are for men skilled in therapeutics, government and business efficiency. They exist today and their enterprises often show a high ingenuity, but, being chiefly sober, they devote too much of their time to harassing the rest of us. Half-stewed, they would be ten times as humane, and perhaps at least half as efficient. Thousands of them, relieved of their present anti-social duties, would be idle, and eager for occupation. I trust to them in this small matter. If they didn't succeed completely, they would at least succeed partially.

The objection remains that even

small doses of alcohol, if each followed upon the heels of its predecessor before the effects of the latter had worn off, would have a deleterious effect upon the physical health of the race — that the death-rate would increase, and whole categories of human beings would be exterminated. The answer here is that what I propose is not lengthening the span of life, but augmenting its joys. Suppose we assume that its duration is reduced 20 per cent. My reply is that its delights will be increased at least 100 per cent. Misled by statisticians, we fall only too often into the error of worshipping mere figures. To say that A will live to be 80 and B will die at 40 is certainly not to argue plausibly that A is more to be envied than B. A, in point of fact, may have to spend all of his 80 years in Kansas or Arkansas, with nothing to eat save corn and hog-meat and nothing to drink save polluted river water, whereas B may put in his 20 years of discretion upon the Côte d'Azur, *wie Gott in Frankreich*. It is my contention that the world I picture, even assuming the average duration of human life to be cut down 50 per cent, would be an infinitely happier and more charming world than what we live in today — that no intelligent human being, having once tasted its peace and joy, would go back voluntarily to the harsh brutalities and stupidities which we now suffer, and so idiotically strive to prolong.

If intelligent Americans, in these depressing days, still cling to life and try to stretch it out longer and longer, it is surely not logically but only atavistically. It is the primeval brute in them that hangs on, not the man. The man knows only too well that ten years in a genuinely civilized and happy country would be infinitely better than a geological epoch under the curses he must face and endure every hour today.

Moreover, there is no need to admit that the moderate alcoholization of the whole race would materially reduce the duration of life. A great many of us are moderately alcoholized already, and yet manage to survive quite as long as the blue-noses. As for the blue-noses themselves, who would repine if breathing alcohol-laden air brought them down with delirium tremens and so sterilized and exterminated them? The advantage to the race in general would be obvious and incalculable. All the worst strains — which now not only persist, but even prosper — would be stamped out in a few generations, and so the average human being would move appreciably away from, say, the norm of a Baptist clergyman in Georgia and toward the norm of Shakespeare, Mozart and Goethe. It would take aeons, of course, to go all the way, but there would be progress with every generation, slow but sure. Today, it must be manifest, we make no progress at all; instead we slip steadily back-

ward. That the average American of today is greatly inferior to the average American of two or three generations ago is too plain to need arguing. He has less enterprise and courage; he is less resourceful and intelligent; he is more like a rabbit and less like a lion. Harsh oppressions have made him what he is. He is the victim of tyrants. . . . Well, no man with two or three cocktails in him is a tyrant. He may be foolish, but he is not cruel. He may be noisy, but he is genial, tolerant, generous and kind. My proposal would restore Christianity to the world. It would rescue mankind from moralists, pedants and brutes.

(February, 1924)

Common Sense

EVERY TIME I hear a man pound a table with his fist and loudly endorse common sense, I permit myself a large and long-range spit. What, swallowing again and making slowly ready for the next wet critique, I ask myself is this much lauded common sense? Is it the absolute thing it is believed to be? Has the phrase, indeed, any common sense in it? The answer is no. Common sense is what any man, however idiotic, believes it to be. What one man regards as common sense, further, another man, equally intelligent, does not regard as common sense. The common sense of one generation is often found to be the nonsense of the next generation. It is as variable

as the wind. Common sense, in short, is frequently nothing more than a name for a man's foolish conviction that what he thinks is right. Is there such a thing as absolute truth? Is there such a thing as absolute common sense? No prize is offered for the correct answer.

(November, 1924)

The Five-Inch Shelf

I AM ALWAYS sceptical of the honesty of a man's culture if his library shelves fail to reveal at least a few grotesquely unintelligible volumes. In the heart of every genuinely cultivated man there is a peculiar fond-

ness for certain books that, though perhaps trashy and empty to some of us, are for one reason or another close to his secret fancy.

(May, 1925)

Reflection in the Twilight

MY CONFIDENTIAL AGENT lays upon my desk certain newspaper clippings. At least half of them denounce me as a bad American. Perhaps, after all, the accusation has some truth in it, as accusations sometimes do. My fundamental offense, I begin to suspect, is real and serious: I believe in liberty and I advocate honor. (December, 1924)

Truth and Temptation

» Every normal man must be tempted, at times, to spit on his hands, hoist the black flag, and begin slitting throats.

H. L. MENCKEN, PREJUDICES.

» The smallest atom of truth represents some man's bitter toil and agony; for every ponderable chunk of it there is a brave truth-seeker's grave upon some lonely ash dump and a soul roasting in hell.

H. L. MENCKEN, PREJUDICES.

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Peter Viereck

Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals:

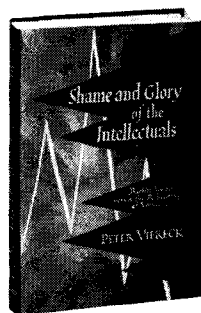
Babbitt Junior vs. the Rediscovery of Values

In this book the distinguished young historian and Pulitzer Prize winner mercilessly dissects the clichés of Babbitt Junior ("Gaylord Babbitt"), not only in politics, but in art and life as well. Who is "Babbitt Junior"? He is variously described in this book as a "lumpen intellectual" and a "Stalinoid upper-middlebrow."

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